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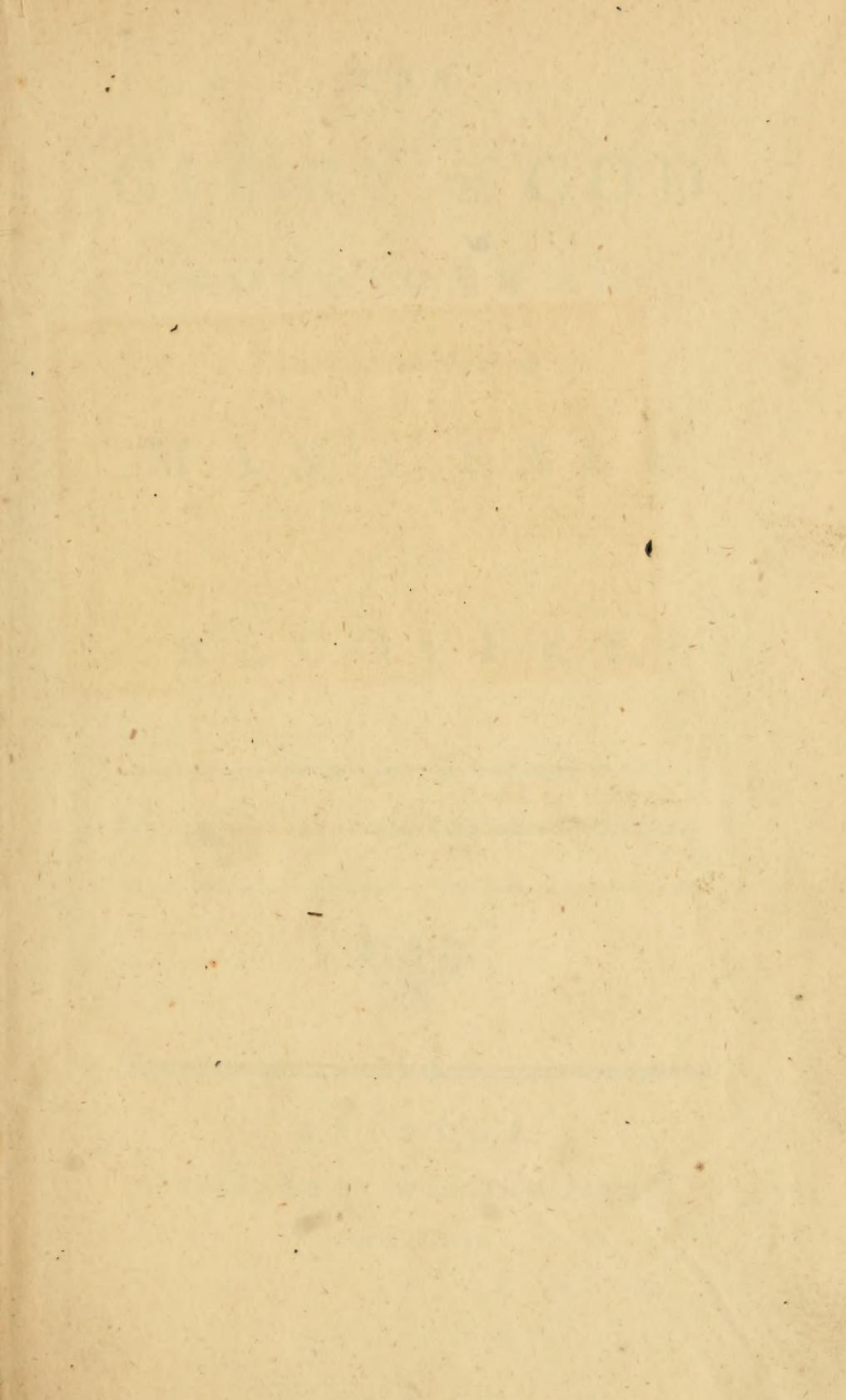
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The glory of God considered
in reference to man's fall
and recovery ...

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THE
GLORY of GOD
CONSIDERED,
IN REFERENCE TO
MAN'S FALL
AND
RECOVERY.

PSALM lxix. 4. *Then I restored that which I took not away.*



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IT may not be improper to inform those, into whose hands the ensuing papers may come, that love to my deceased brother by whom they were penned, the request of his surviving friends, and a sincere desire of promoting Christian knowledge, are the chief motives of their publication.

The Author had good natural and acquired abilities; but was far more distinguished by his piety, benevolence, humility, and unblemished life and conversation. Few men, in so limited a circle as that in which he moved, have been more esteemed in life, or lamented in death. Having much time on his hands, he employed it in writing these, and other treatises of a similar nature, for his own benefit and amusement: and the attentive and serious reader, it is presumed, will find such a vein of piety and Christian experience in the work here presented to him, as will amply recompence the defects he may observe in the style and manner of composition. The subjects insisted on are interesting and important, calculated to edify and comfort all serious unprejudiced readers. They chiefly respect the knowledge of Christ, in his divine person, offices, atonement, salvation, and glory; the necessity of faith in Christ; and the means by which it is begun, carried on, and perfected.

felected. It was the Author's sentiment, that the Gospel Call to the chief of sinners to believe in Christ, and come to him for acceptance with God, without any previous qualifications, was every way consistent with the nature of justification; the subjects of which, as described by St. Paul, Rom. iv. 3, 4, 5. are not the righteous, but the ungodly. From this consideration he shews, that all persons, solicitous to obtain salvation, have encouragement to come to Christ, under the deepest sense of their guilt and unworthiness; he gives them some particular directions how to come, and points out to believers the means by which their faith and comfort may be increased and established. That these were not subjects of mere speculation to the Author, but important realities, he gave sufficient evidence, by the influence they had on his mind, not only in life, but even in his dying moments, causing him to triumph over the King of Terrors, and rejoice in the prospect of eternal glory. That they may have the same effect upon the mind of the reader,

Is the sincere prayer of

The Editor,

PLYMOUTH,
OCT. 1786.

P. GIBBS.

THE
GLORY of GOD
CONSIDERED, &c.

C H A P. I.

Job xxii. 2. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?

THE term, or expression Glory, signifies lustre, brightness and excellency; or what exceeds in weight or quantity; which when applied to God, is expressive, not only of the manifestation and display of his divine perfections, but more properly of the attributes themselves peculiar to his nature: To this purpose the Psalmist. *Psalm xix. 1. The Heavens declare the Glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy Work.* All the creatures which have already existed, or ever shall exist, have not added, neither shall add in the least degree to, or take from the glory and excellency of his divine nature, perfections and attributes; because he is the infinite and self-existent Jehovah,

and therefore not capable of alteration and mutability: The mighty operations of his power, either in things intelligent, or unintelligent, were not necessary to render him more happy; nor will the endless blasphemies of lost men and angels detract from his felicity and blessedness: If so, well might holy David say *Psalms* xvi. 2. *My goodness extendeth not to thee.* Nay, though considered as the words of Christ himself, (of whom David was a type) in reference to the whole work of redemption, we may safely conclude they were uttered with the utmost propriety; since the Lord is perfect in himself, and the spring and author of all good. These considerations beget in the minds even of the blessed angels above, the profoundest reverence, and the most ardent love and gratitude, in that the infinitely great and glorious Jehovah should condescend to listen to their praises, or regard their services; wherefore man in this state of sin and misery, to think that he can profit God by any service that he can do, is the highest presumption and folly; of which all, who do so, will be convinced when the self-sufficient, and independent Jehovah shall put that awful question to them, *Job* xli. 11. *Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him?* Reader! what thinkest thou of thyself? Art thou one of those, who imagine themselves independent of God? Dost thou suppose, touching the good thou

dost,

dost, that he was not the author of it ? Thou sayest perhaps, that it is inconsistent with the will of a rational creature, not to be at liberty ; and that the nature thereof is, to be self-inclined : If this be thy opinion hearken to what an inspired penman saith *Phillip. ii. 12, 13.* *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling : for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* But if thou art one, whom the Lord has taught, thou wilt say in the words of inspiration, *Rom. xi. 36.* *Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever.*

C H A P. II.

THE GLORIFICATION OF GOD.

Proverbs xvi. 4. The Lord hath made all things for himself.

THAT the Lord cannot be profited by any creature whatever hath already been proved. Why then, think you, did he command into existence the creatures of his power ? If without any design ; wisdom itself is degraded below the meanest of rational beings. If with ; certainly the end decreed must be most worthy the God of wisdom ; and expressive of his infinity. If we be still at a loss to say, what the design might be ;

truth, or more properly the God of truth, will satisfy us. "The Lord hath made all things for himself," is the answer. How for himself if he be not profited thereby? Why, The answer is plain viz. To declare and set forth his excellencies and perfections; to make known his attributes and properties; and to display to intelligent creatures his lustre, brightness, and splendor, in proportion to their ability and capacity to conceive, or apprehend it. Were mankind in their searches and researches into divine truths, and especially those which relate to their eternal welfare, to fix this point well in their minds; it would under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, mightily help them to an acquaintance with their own hearts, the great evil of their sin both by nature and practice; lead them to condemn themselves before the Lord on account thereof, and be a guide and preservative in determining the foundation of their hope of future blessedness. Whether we believe it, or not, it is an undoubted truth, that every fundamental error, touching the salvation of the soul, dishonors the perfections and attributes of God; and consequently the person who maintains it, does what in him lies, to frustrate the end of his creation, and brings the matter to this awful issue, if he be saved, God must be dishonored. But to return. All that an infinite being can receive from creatures, is a due acknowledgment

of his excellencies, according to the measure of their discovery. Wherefore to pay no attention thereto, argues the grossest stupidity and blindness. How does this reflect on infinite wisdom, as if the Lord's design deserved not our notice ! Nay, such inattention is a theft of the worst sort, even of his glory ; and the language of such a conduct, is even blasphemy, if not downright atheism. Should not these considerations put us on the inquiry into our own conduct ? Should not each ask his soul and say ? O, my soul ! and hast thou glorified God ? If not, to what end dost thou live ? Has God given thee a being to no purpose ? Or art thou independent of him ? Hast thou answered the end of thy creation, and manifested thyself worthy of thy existence ? This thou canst not assert ; because thou art a sinner, and hast come short of the glory of God. But say, art thou convinced of thy lamentable condition, and dost thou see thyself incapable of making the great God of heaven and earth restitution for the injury done him ? If thou dost ; I would yet ask thee, what thinkest thou of Christ ? Dost thou suppose, that he as the great mediator and day's-man hath glorified Jehovah ? O, consider then for whom he did it, even for sinners : for such as thou art ! O fly then unto him ! Take refuge in him ; which if thou truly shalt do, then wilt thou to eternity shew forth the praises of him that created

created thee : and instead of cursing, wilt for ever bless the day of thine existence.

C H A P. III.

GOD IS GLORIFIED BY THE INANIMATE, AND IRRATIONAL CREATION.

Psalm xix. 1. The heavens declare the Glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy work.

Psalm cxlv. 10. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord.

GOD may be glorified in a two-fold respect. First, By the evidence of his excellency inherent in his operations.

Secondly, By his intelligent creatures perceiving, admiring, and declaring his doings.

In the first sense we are to understand the figurative expressions contained in the above scriptures : for the inanimate and brutal creation cannot praise the Lord in the same manner as angels and men may, and ought : the praise of the former is objective, that is, they contain sufficient matter of praise : they speak aloud to men and angels the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. Not only the wonderful and stupendous orbs above us, but even the meanest insect which crawls on our earth, speaks aloud the glory of its Creator, in displaying his amazing power,

power, and declaring his consumate wisdom, both in their being, and utility,

Secondly, God may be glorified by his intelligent creatures perceiving, admiring, and declaring his doings, viz. his noble acts in creation: for that is the subject we are now upon. Were no rational creature ever to have existed, it would be hard to say, how the unintelligent creation could have glorified their Maker; as there would have been no eye properly to have beheld his excellencies manifested thereby; and no ear to have heard their loud and lofty praises. If so, how then ought man to attend to their speech! how ought he to observe their instruction! if he be altogether careless in this respect, does he not dishonor the Lord of nature, and tacitly affirm there is no God? For if they be created to a certain end, that end must be worthy of the divine wisdom: and what can that be but the revelation of their divine Maker? For as an inimitable painting sets forth the ingenuity of its artist; or a superb and elegant edifice, the extraordinary skill of its architect; so do the inanimate and irrational creatures display the wisdom and goodness of God, but with this difference, that, as the former may be expressive of the utmost of human skill and ability; the latter declares, but in part, the divine excellency and power: however; if thereby, the perfections of God be declared; the man who wilfully

wilfully shuts his eyes and ears, though he may not do it with his lips, yet by his practice boldly declares there is no God: thus did not David: for says he *Psalms* viii. 3, 4. *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?* and in the last verse crys out, *O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!* But though men may sinfully disregard the glory of God in the creation, yet doubtless the blessed angels pry into those mysteries of divine power; and continually extol the infinite wisdom of God therein manifested.

CHAP. IV.

THE GLORY OF GOD DISPLAYED IN THE RATIONAL CREATION.

John viii. 44. *And abode not in the truth.*

Genesis i. 27. *So God created man in his own image.*

FROM the scriptures here prefixed we gather, there was not an angel in heaven when this glorious rank of beings were first created but what was holy; also, that Adam when he came out of his Maker's hands, and all his posterity considered in him were upright and spotless: to suppose the contrary, would be casting dishonor

on the glorious Jehovah ; and impeaching, either his wisdom, power, or goodness in the formation of the most excellent part of his creation : hence it follows, that Adam before his fall, as well as angels, possessed not only a natural, but moral ability to know, love, and serve God. To suppose any created being capable of knowledge, love, and service, and yet these faculties unemployed in reference to God himself, even to their utmost extent ; or employed on any object in preference to him, is the very nature of sin, dishonorable to the Lord and renders the creature vain : therefore the display not only of the divine power and wisdom, but of the holiness, love and goodness of God was designed in the existence of rational beings. With respect to the display of the divine power, let it be observed, that the angelic world was formed before the inanimate creation : and in those bright intelligences first shone abroad the divine omnipotency, being in measure conscious of the immateriality of their nature, and acquainted with the faculties and powers, wherewith they were endowed, they both actively and passively praised their maker. David could say, *Psalm cxxxix. 14. I will praise thee ; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Shall we then suppose the Lord had no praise of this kind from angels previous to material existences ? Again. This attribute was glorified by the angelic host when the

material worlds first arose into being, as is evident from the Lord's own testimony. *Job xxxviii. 6, 7. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof? when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* If in the formation of the earth they glorified divine power, why not also in the creation of the vast universe ?

That the excellency of divine wisdom was also herein exhibited is manifest from the words of inspiration. *Psalm civ. 24. O Lord how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.* Consequently the angels of God's power, were endued with wisdom, that, they might wonder at, admire, and extol the infinite wisdom of God, discovered not only in their own created excellencies ; but also shining forth in the heavens and earth, and the variety of creatures, with which the earth was replenished : if Adam could readily name the animal creation, according to their several natures ; *Gen. ii. 19,* doubtless angels fell not short of him in wisdom, and penetration. Again. That divine holiness was to be magnified in the rational creation is plain, hence the angels are called holy angels. *Matt. xxv. 31. When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.* The want of holiness in those that fell, hath changed them into devils. 'Tis an observation of *Charneauk* on the divine Attributes, pag. 500, that,

" The

" The angels are not pure in his sight, because,
 " though they love God : (which is a principle of
 " holiness) as much as they can, yet not so much,
 " as he deserves; God having an infinite knowledge
 " of himself, and consequently an infinite hol-
 " i ness without any defect, because he loves himself
 " according to the vastness of his own amiableness;
 " which no finite being can." But the impurity
 here mentioned is no sinful deficiency; inasmuch
 as their moral rectitude is equal to their natural
 powers. Hence the display of divine love: be-
 cause in creatures so formed, it must shine forth
 in amazing splendor; for happiness is concreated
 with their very existence, and sweetly harmoni-
 ous, to advance the honor of the divine excellen-
 cies, more than possibly could be done by the
 whole unintelligent creation. Therefore their
 existence is expressive of the infinite goodness of
 God, who made so wonderfully to meet, even his
 own glory and their happiness. What has been
 said in this chapter of angels, may with propriety
 be spoken of our first parents. Though Adam in
 a state of innocence dwelt not in the mansions
 above; yet he was as capable of glorifying God in
 his measure, as the heavenly inhabitants; wanting
 no knowledge of his maker necessary to that end,
 but always filled with the most suitable perceptions,
 and apprehensions of his love, and loveliness, ne-
 cessary to that purpose. He clearly perceived the

divine excellencies shining forth in the creatures around him, as appears by the names he gave those the Lord brought him ; and without doubt had the most perfect and abiding sense, and approbation of his duty, and obligation to his great creator and benefactor. But say reader, Is this the present case with his posterity ? Is it the case with thee ? Peradventure, thou didst never put such a question to thyself, supposing, that God does not expect to find what we all lost in Adam ; but will be satisfied with our mean and sinful service : however I must ask again, If this be allowed, how is God to be glorified ? Can that nature, which is totally dead in sin set forth the praise of infinite purity ? Does thy understanding always conceive of God, thyself, and the whole of God's will with that supreme delight and pleasure, that his law requires ? Art thou able in all cases and conditions to judge aright of thy duty ? Is thy memory capable at all times of retaining, what relates to God's glory, and thy obligations ? What are thy thoughts ? Is thy imagination always the subject of the most sublime, suitable, and seasonable thoughts of the greatness, holiness, love and goodness of God, of the things which relate to his image and authority, and that contribute to set forth his perfections ? Was it never tainted with pride, unbelief, lasciviousness, envy, covetousness ? Did thy conscience never upbraid thee ?

No,

No, not even when thou apprehendedst thyself ready to enter into an eternal world? Couldst thou then think of God with the greatest delight? Is thy will wholly engaged in obedience; not the least backwardness and indifference attending it; but with the most consummate delight, dost thou discharge every duty of thought, word, and deed, without failure or mistake? If thou canst not answer these questions in the affirmative; how thinkest thou to answer God when he shall question thee; whose knowledge of his own law far transcends that of any human creature in this present sinful estate? But if thou art convinced, that thy nature is now like a corrupt stock; which can bring forth nought but corrupt fruit: that thou art both in a condemned and helpless condition, under the wrath of God, and without strength; say not, it is impossible God should be glorified, and thou eternally happy; but rather search and see, whether infinite wisdom hath not devised some method, whereby thou mayest be saved, and yet all the honor due to Jehovah maintained.

C H A P. V.

THE AUTHORITY AND GOODNESS OF GOD
MANIFESTED IN THE COVENANT OF WORKS
WITH ADAM AND HIS POSTERITY.

Dan. iv. 34. Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.

Matt. xix. 17. If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments.

THAT the Lord had a right to appoint our first parents some test of their love and fidelity we cannot doubt, if we consider the relation they stood in to him: he was their creator, they his creatures: he their benefactor, they the recipients of his benefits: he their father, they the children: he their king, they his subjects. If this had not been done, how would the majesty and authority of God appeared? Can we suppose, that the Lord would have brought creatures into being, to subvert the very end of their existence? Is not his glory (as before proved) the rule of his actions? or in other words, has not the eternal Jehovah created all things for himself? To have constituted Adam independent of his maker would have been injurious to his authority. Even our fallen reason shudders at such a thought; and cannot

cannot admit the possibility of it : but hear what the Lord saith, *Isaiah xlvi. 8. I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give unto another.*— But some persons may reply, we grant all this, yet we doubt this point, that Adam represented his posterity : for can that be subject to any authority which hath no existence ? To answer this question I would further observe, that the Lord not only appointed a test to Adam, which he might have done, without granting him a promise of any further blessedness, though he should prove obedient. But secondly, he entered into covenant with him and his posterity. Herein the goodness of God is magnified : because, had not Adam transgressed, both he and they would, without doubt, have been translated from an earthly to a celestial blessedness : this is evident from the words of our Lord above prefixed, *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments*, and from many other passages of scripture ; which fœderal representation, I imagine, none would have found fault with, had Adam been faithful. However, that the covenant of works was of this nature appears plain from divine testimony, *Rom. v. 12. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin : and so death passed upon all men*, for that all have sinned, or in whom all have sinned, which being proved is a sufficient answer to the objection : because the Lord can do nothing inconsistent

consistent with his own glory. Though mankind in general are very apt to find fault with this part of the divine œconomy, yet in the transactions of civil matters they pursue the very same mode of conduct. Do not men chuse a few to represent an whole nation ? Are not laws enacted by which many unborn are affected ? Or are the electors the whole of a nation ; or a part only ? Yet, who finds fault in this respect ? Wherefore, we do well humbly to explore divine truths, and not to measure them by our carnal reason : for even this wonderful, and mysterious transaction, might under a divine influence be very profitable ; were we to ponder it with an eye to God's glory, and our own spiritual good. Because by comparing that which God required of us in our first head, with what we are at present even in heart and life ; perhaps we might be convinced of our spiritual misery and helplessness, be led to deplore our sad condition and circumstances, be induced to admit of being saved by the righteousness of Jesus, seeing we are condemned by the sin of Adam ; and acknowledge, that if the one will terminate in the glory of justice in a way of punishment ; the other will be for the glory of mercy, consistent with holiness and justice, in a way of salvation.

C H A P : VI.

IF GOD BE NOT GLORIFIED IN MAN'S OBE-DIENCE, HE WILL BE GLORIFIED IN THE PUNISHMENT OF HIS DISOBEDIENCE.

Gen. ii. 17. For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

HEREBY we may learn God's immediate, and awful denunciation of death on our first parents, in case they should eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which he had forbidden them to eat of: comprehending a far greater evil, than the death of the body. Not only were both our first parents personally concerned in this awful declaration, but mankind in general, or the whole human race, were to be held innocent, or condemned, according to the obedience or disobedience of the first man. Therefore the execution of the sentence, death, took place upon himself, and posterity, immediately on his violation of the command, not to eat of that tree. By death we are to understand, 1st. death temporal; 2d. spiritual; 3d. eternal. That the death of the body was in consequence of Adam's transgression, is so universally acknowledged (except by a few Socinians) that it would be to very little purpose to

spend time to prove it. But because experience teacheth that many die, who never committed actual sin, as well as others, therefore, these men have asserted, that Adam was mortal before the fall ; and not in consequence of his first transgression : the reason they alledge is, because his nature in innocency was perishable : this we allow in one respect, though not in another. If he had been above the power of death, independent of God's decree, what belongs to God might have been attributed unto him : but Paul says, speaking of God, *1 Tim. vi. 15. Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light* : however if Adam's immortality was God's appointment, whilst he continued in a state of integrity, then his nature was impassable during that state : for all creatures, are neither less, nor more, than what God makes them : they subsist not of themselves when created ; but, that same power which brought them into existence continues them in it : wherefore as by the decree of God, he was at first immortal, likewise, by his appointment he became mortal ; and began to feel the harbingers of death within him : and no longer exempted from its stroke than the Lord pleased. If this be the case with every one of his posterity, how is it we lay it no more to heart ? Are we not as unconcerned, as if we were to live here always ? What, do we think we have no more existence when we die ? If so, we might well say

1 Cor. xv. 32. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Secondly, By death we are also to understand spiritual death: this is nothing less than the loss of the divine image, which took place immediately on Adam's first offence. *Gen. iii. 7. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked:* being convinced of their sin and guilt, yet as appears from verses 12, 13. very ready to make sinful excuses: in chap. v. ver. 3. it is said, *And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his own image; and called his name Seth;* which compared with the words of Christ, *John iii. 6, 7. will plainly prove the point in hand: " That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."* Hence it is manifest beyond contradiction, that Adam's nature immediately on his first offence; and the nature of every individual of his offspring, are in a moral sense exactly similar. Did he, by that transgression, fall under the displeasure of God? So did we. Was the consequence thereof a loss of the divine image? This took effect, not only on him, but us also. Did his understanding become dark, his memory treacherous respecting soul concerns, his imagination polluted, his conscience stupid, and erroneous, his will perverse and stubborn, and his affections disorderly and irregular? This

is exactly the case with us. So that the guilt incurred by his fall is punished with the loss of that rectitude, which might have prevented both him, and us, from adding sin to sin : wherefore no man as he comes into the world, but will unavoidably sin, and do nothing but sin. All his seemingly righteous acts will be all unrighteous : for as the stream cannot rise above its source, neither can the corrupt heart of man bring forth any good fruit. Were we duly apprized hereof, it might repress much, that self-confidence to which we are all so prone : to be justified by the law, is to fulfil it : but if we violate it, in thought, word, and deed at all times, and on all occasions, and cannot but do so, (our very nature being cursed by it) how should any supposed conformity thereto qualify us for salvation through Christ Jesus ? If we be dead in sin by nature, and not in a diseased estate only ; and if the law be not a ministration of life, but of death, it will follow, no convictions of the law can alter our state : wherefore, when the Lord the spirit, through the gospel giveth life ; be the man's convictions what they may, or his legal righteousness ever so splendid in the eyes of men, he finds such a soul, not the subject of spiritual life in a very small measure, but absolutely dead in trespasses and sins, and not the least grain of goodness in it. Again. They who are under the law, are under the power of a corrupt nature : this

this appears from various parts of scripture. In *Rom.* chap. vii. ver. 4, 5. the apostle shews the difference between the renewed, and unrenewed man, and the causes of it. “ Wherefore my brethren, (says he) ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God,” *Rom.* vii. 4. evidently implying, that no fruit can be brought forth unto God, until we be dead unto the law, and the law unto us: for if we have no faith in Christ, who hath satisfied the law; though we should even despair of ever attaining righteousness and life by it, yet the law hath still the same claim on us: but he adds, for when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death: evincing, that the law only irritates natural corruption, to produce more abundantly the fruit of sin in heart and life: wherefore the apostle, chap. vi. 14. says, *For sin shall not have the dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* From all which, it is clearly evident, that if God’s love be not manifested to us, we cannot love him: that where no true manifestation thereof exists, in that heart sin reigns: and also, that as the reign of sin began with the displeasure of God, so the destruction of its reigning power must be the fruit of his being reconciled.

reconciled. By unbelief we first fell in Adam; by faith in Christ only, are we recovered. As unbelief is the root of all other vices, so faith in Christ is the root of all other graces. By unbelief we are independent and presumptuous, by faith in God through Christ we are dependent upon, and attribute all unto him. Unbelief puts the crown upon the head of the creature, but faith gives the whole glory only to the mediator: wherefore, where no true gospel faith is, there the power of God is not manifested to renew and sanctify. Thirdly, Death being the curse of the law, cannot but include eternal death, that is, an everlasting separation from divine favor, and an enduring to eternity God's wrath and indignation, as the just reward of sin and transgression. Had not eternal death been contained in the threatening, we might well suppose spiritual death no part of the punishment for Adam's first sin: because they who are spiritually dead, sin with pleasure. But if divine justice not only arraigns man for Adam's first offence, but also for sinful and corrupt nature, the consequence thereof, together with all its sinful progeny, in heart, lip, and life, then is spiritual death a very awful punishment; and proves the great malignity of that first offence; as also, of every individual act of sin; whether of an internal, or external nature.— That eternal death is contained in the threatening, is

is obvious from divers parts of God's word, consisting first in a privation of eternal life. Secondly in the infliction of eternal punishment.

That it consists in the privation of eternal life will appear, if we consult *Rom. v. 18, 19*. Therefore, saith the apostle, *as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life: for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous*. As life here mentioned includes both life spiritual, and eternal, being the fruit of justification, consequently, not sinners through Adam, but the righteous by Christ, shall inherit eternal life. Again. *John* in his first epistle, v. 12. faith, *He that hath the Son, hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life*. If then life be alone through Christ, eternal life must have been before forfeited, not only by actual offenders, but even by them, who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression: for it pleased the Father to reconcile in Christ all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven, *Col. i. 20*. Hence it is conclusive, that privation of eternal life is comprehended in this divine threatening.

Secondly, That the infliction of eternal pain or punishment is comprised under the expression death, will appear, if we consult *Ephes. ii. 3*. For the

apostle speaking of himself, as well as those to whom he wrote, saith " Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." If by nature all were children of wrath, then certainly they are so, on account of Adam's disobedience : yea, and must suffer eternal wrath, unless chosen in Christ. But it may be objected ; that, though the divine displeasure be eternal, and the objects of it be punished with everlasting punishment, yet, this arises not from the nature of sin, considered as an individual act ; but from the constant, and unremitting series of those acts to eternity ; so that, had it been possible for Adam after the commission of his first offence to have remained holy in his nature and practice, that offence would not have deserved everlasting misery ; because his acts of righteousness before his fall, and his act of disobedience when he fell, were both the acts of a creature : wherefore the former could not glorify the majesty, holiness, and goodness of God ; neither could the latter dishonor God in these perfections according to the infinitude of their nature, the acts being finite. To investigate this very important point demands our utmost attention, seeing that many from a wrong view thereof, have contented themselves with a Savior less than infinite

nite in his nature and dignity. It is to be questioned, whether a learned and intelligent person can be found, who denying the proper divinity of Christ will confess at the same time, that a single act of sin deserves everlasting punishment. To suppose sin cannot be an infinite evil, because no creature can perform an infinite act, is not to the purpose : for neither righteousness, nor sin is of a physical, but a moral nature : for if we allow it to be of a physical nature, how shall we maintain the dependence of all creatures on their Creator ? Since it is said *Acts xvii. 28.* that, *In him we live, and move, and have our being.* The act of any creature, were it subject to no law, could neither be good, nor evil ; yet it would not cease to be an act. Though we will and do, we do not so of ourselves independent of God, seeing these are natural acts of the mind and body ; for should we claim this power ourselves, we should attribute to the creature what is essential to the infinite Jehovah ; therefore they who conclude sin to be physical, fall into Fatalism, and cannot extricate themselves from the charge of making God the author of it, without making the creature independent of him. Wherefore sin is not a substance, but an accident ; nor as such, of a positive but privative nature. First, sin is not a substance for the reasons before assigned. Neither man, nor angel cease to be such, because they are sinful :

were it otherwise, Adam after his fall must have been another man, than what he was before it ; and when renewed, (as we doubt not but he is now in glory) he would not have been the same man he was, either before or after the fall. — Righteousness in the creature is no substance, tho' not a privation as sin is : for the former is from God ; the latter without him. Wherefore to say that an infinite act of righteousness was necessary in the creature to glorify the infinite majesty, holiness, and goodness of God ; or of sin to dishonor these his infinite excellencies, is talking without proper thought and reflexion. Let us then enquire what sin is ; and whence it derives its evil nature.

First, What is sin ? 'Tis replied,

Secondly, That it is an accident, which attends the inward operations of the mind ; and from thence in man the outward actions of the body ; and implies some rule, to which these ought to be conformed, nevertheless are not : hence it may be divided into positive and negative. Sin positive, is when any act of the mind or body is contrary to the law ; and sin negative, when that is not performed which is required ; or more properly, it is so called because it is a violation of the command or law of God : for no rational creature can do amiss, if the divine law find no fault with him. All our offences committed against

against one another, be they of what nature they may, are sins against God himself: therefore all obedience to man should be for the Lord's sake; otherwise we set the creature in the place of him. Our next enquiry is, Whence does sin derive its evil nature? As it has been already observed, that sin is not the action of an intelligent creature but the form of the action; therefore it is moral; and its evil is purely objective: which point being once fixed, the measure of that evil will be in proportion to the dignity and excellence of the object, against which it is committed. In respect to human government, this rule always takes place. An offence given to a stranger, a fellow subject or equal, a brother, a parent, a person in office under the prince, a judge, or the prince himself, carries a less, or greater degree of guilt, according to the relation, or dignity of the person, or object offended: how great the guilt then, of an offence against God! Now if the evil of sin, (I speak not of any particular sin, but what action soever will bear that character) takes its rise from its being committed against God, then is it infinite, since the object thereof, is infinite. Indeed there may be more or less obliquity in different sinful acts when compared, or according to the circumstances attending the same sinful act; yet this doth not remove infinitude from the evil of the least sinful act: but you will say, if there be acts of sin,

which have different degrees of evil, then it is subjective also, and may be more than infinite. To this I reply.

First, Sin is sin, as it is a coming short of the law, an aberration from the scope or mark, a passing over the bounds fixed : and in proportion as it exceeds in these respects, so is its obliquity more or less ; now in this respect it is subjective, being the form of the natural act, and consequently adhering to it ; but the evil thereof is entirely objective, and in measure according to that obliquity : for what is any law without a law-giver ? An offence is nothing without there be a person offended.

Secondly, Although every offence against God deserves an infinite punishment, yet the desert of sinners is heightened, according to the number, and obliquity of their offences ; in which assertion there is no impropriety, for the law in respect to its commands, and prohibitions is limited : wherefore the violations of it must be so too. A perpetuity of punishment is due to every offence ; but the degree of punishment is limited, according to the number, and atrociousness of offences ; for we assert not that sinners deserve an infinity of punishment, both intensively, and everlastinglly.— These points are not without proof, see *Matt. xxv. 46. These shall go away into everlasting punishment.—* (viz.) All who are not the blessed of the Father ; all

all for whom an inheritance was not prepared.— Nevertheless, can we conclude that though the persons here spoken of be alike guilty in Adam, and fallen alike in him ; yet there will be found no difference among them through their actual sins, or that some will not deserve a greater degree of wrath than others ? If you say they will then it is apparent from the text, that even one act of sin merits a perpetuity of suffering ; and consequently the death threatened on Adam's transgression includes an eternity of misery.—

Again. Compare the passage last quoted with *Luke xii. 47, 48. And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.* Here a difference is affirmed even by truth itself, touching degrees of torment in a future state. But if any one should still doubt of what is here advanced, let him answer that question put by Moses. *Psalm xc. 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger ? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.* If it be possible therefore to fear an eternity of God's displeasure for one single offence, and such a measure of divine and eternal wrath, as may be in proportion to the number and atrocity of crimes committed, who will be so bold as to say such fears exceed the punishment which God will inflict, since there are

many

many to be found who are the subjects of such fears ? Would not this be giving the lie to the God of truth, and asserting that our apprehensions may exceed his severity ? But you may say *Lam.* iii. 33. the Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. True : for did not his glory require it, this would not be the case.— This Paul observes 2 *Theff.* i. ver. 6. 7, 8, 9. “ It is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you. and to you who are troubled, rest with us ; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”— Hence it clearly appears according to the preface of this chapter, that if God be not glorified in man’s obedience, he will be glorified in the punishment of his disobedience. If his creature will dishonor his infinite majesty, holiness, and goodness, he shall know by woful experience, that his justice also is infinite and unbounded to vindicate the honor of those perfections : for the wise man declares *Prov.* xvi. 4. *The Lord hath made all things for himself ; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.*— Some still object that man before his fall must have glorified God in an infinite degree, if for his

first sin he deserved so great a punishment, as is here noticed. To this we answer ; he certainly glorified God, as God, in those perfections which were revealed to him, even to the utmost extent of his natural powers ; and though a very small vessel, yet was he full of righteousness, and did as completely set forth the praise of him that created him, according to the measure of his natural ability, as the tallest archangel then in glory : however as his nature was limited, he in reality, but imperfectly (though not sinfully) declared what God was ; for being a creature and incapable of shewing forth in point of degree what God was, therefore merited nothing ; nevertheless he was without sin, (as before observed) inasmuch as his moral rectitude kept pace with his natural ability ; yet on his transgression, he absolutely and totally declared God to be what he was not ; yea made truth itself like unto satan, the father of lies ; and thence incurred the Lord's eternal displeasure : which remark is a sufficient reply to the above objection, for if a sinful creature deserves no more in a way of punishment, than a perfect creature doth in a way of reward, it would deserve nothing. From all which we may plainly see that such a behaviour as agrees with the Arian's mode of thinking, is not sufficient to redeem our souls from the misery in which they are involved ; for how can any mere creature satisfy so enormous a debt ?

But

But if the redeemer be God, who can affirm that he is not able, were it much larger than it is ?— Sinner ! Didst thou ever seriously reflect on these things ? Alas ! Thy thoughts have been far otherwise employed. All thy concern has been engaged about the things of this life, what thou shouldst eat, and drink, and wherewithal thou shouldst be cloathed ; nay perhaps more stupid still, as if the Lord had given thee being to act according to the dictates of thine own corrupt heart. If not, how is it that thou art so immersed in worldly pleasures and vanity ? Thou risest in the morning without any thoughts of him who formed thee, maintains the life he gave, and who has bestowed all the blessings thou enjoyest ; and when thou liest down art equally as unconcerned and thoughtless. Pause a while and consider what an awful disparity there is between the Lord's requirements, and thy conduct ! Do the most eminent for grace tremble at the majesty and power of this awful judge, and are they even astonished at his purity, holiness, and justice ? What then must thy case be ! Are they concerned from day to day notwithstanding their constant prayers, watchfulness, and fightings with the corrupt inclinations of their hearts, the temptations of the devil, and the frowns and flatteries of the world, to enjoy a testimony of the forgiveness of their sins ? And thou never once enquirest how thy sins might be forgiven. Thou wilt say, God

is merciful : but didst thou never read, nor hear of his justice also ? How wilt thou reconcile his infinite justice and mercy, if thou expectest forgiveness without enquiring what a sinner thou hast been ; and how the guilt of thy great and numerous offences may be pardoned, consistent with his glory ? Oh, be convinced then, that for thy first father's offence thou art condemned; that the nature thou derivedst from him is accursed, being altogether sinful ; and that thou hast done nothing but sin, ever since thou wert born ; yea, thy thoughts, thy desires, inclinations, and affections are entirely polluted ; and thy words and actions one continued series of transgressions ; (for each of which mental and external offences, thou deservest endless punishment.) If thou shouldest be so persuaded, surely Jesus will be precious to thee, when revealed in thy heart by his spirit. A little Savior (when so convinced) will not do, no, thou wilt then see, that thou art a great sinner : yea, thou wilt see all thy sins even so great, that not one can be removed, but by an Almighty Redeemer.

THE DISPLAY OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS,
IN THE REDEMPTION AND SALVATION OF
THE LORD'S ELECT PEOPLE (FROM THE
RUINS OF THE FALL) BY JESUS CHRIST,
CONSIDERED.

C H A P. VII.

THE MERCY OF GOD.

Titus iii. 5. According to his mercy he saved us.

THE display of God's love was as early as the creation of the angelic world, for in that consisted their unspeakable happiness and felicity ; which they all retained, as long as they continued in the integrity, and uprightness, in which they were created. Though many fell through sin, from this estate of consummate bliss, into the most wretched circumstances ; yet love was farther displayed, in securing an innumerable host of those blessed spirits from the like awful condition. The fall of angels unveiled the justice and severity of God ; but his mercy as yet remained wrapt up and hidden : when man was seduced by satan, 'tis not certain angels were acquainted with this attribute, until the first promise made to our fallen parents : however, though this promise had never

been

been made, yet God would have remained to eternity the infinitely merciful God, because it is an essential attribute of his nature. Mercy differs from love, inasmuch as mercy is not love to the holy and righteous; but to the condemned and sinful: nay it knows no objects, but what are to the last degree wretched; and such only are so, who are wholly destitute of the favor and image of God as just and righteous. Were there but a little worthiness in any fallen creature, the salvation of such an one (if saved) could not be of pure mercy, and if not of pure mercy, how would mercy as infinite, be glorified? Though this divine perfection be to be considered, as independent of all purposes of mercy, yet it is the ground and foundation of them. Though the Lord hath determined to save some only of the fallen race of Adam; yet it is matter of no little encouragement to the self-convicted and self-condemned, that mercy is an excellency peculiar to him. Let not such therefore despair, though they may have the largest apprehensions of their desert, and the most striking conviction of their spiritual deadness and inability. What! though thou canst not come to Christ, yet consider still, God is a God of mercy. In him are boundless mercies. Art thou blind? He hath illuminating mercy, he can soon give thee to see, and persuade thee also what a suitable Savior Christ is for thee; what a suffici-

ency in his atonement for thy pardon, and in his righteousness for thy justification. But thou sayest I don't know that I am an object of God's electing mercy, therefore how can I hope ? But dost thou know that thou art not ? If thou dost then thou mayest well despair. If thou hast still an eye to Christ, though thou hast not strength to come, look to his mercy to draw thee ; but perhaps thou objectest I have no warrant to come. God doth not invite me. Were I better, and could I more sincerely repent, were my sins less powerful ; yea were I not so filled with iniquity as I am, I might then take some encouragement ; but in my present condition, it is impossible the Lord should call me. If he invites not thee, whom thinkest thou he does invite ? The most miserable and wretched are not excluded ; nay, his mercy is so great he invites all to whom his gospel comes ; but alas ! all have not ears to hear the invitation ; therefore be assured, that whatever complaint prevents thy coming to Christ, he can remove ; and I am sure (if thou seest the need of mercy) nothing but legality and unbelief are impediments to it ; yet however look unto mercy to remove even these.

C H A P. VIII.

THE REVELATION OF MERCY.

Gen. iii. 15. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

AS the revelation of divine mercy could not have been made, but in strict consistency with the honor of those perfections, which man by sin had affronted; therefore in the display of mercy, the Lord determined they should shine forth with a more glorious splendor. To contrive so great and eminent a design, infinite wisdom was engaged; and to effect it, almighty power was exerted. How sinful man could be restored to the favor, and image of God, consistent with the glory of God's holiness and justice, was far beyond the limit of creature understanding to determine. This great mystery began to be unfolded in the promulgation of this first promise to our fallen parents, contained in the threatening denounced against the serpent, hence it appeared that a mediator was appointed; who should in the fulness of time restore the injury done to the divine perfections by man's offence, and recover man from all the miseries, which by his sin he had involved himself in; so without doubt our first parents understood

derstood this gracious declaration, how it might be explained, we are not certain ; but be that as it may, it appears very plain that by the early use of sacrifices the mediator was to them pointed out, as a substitute in their room and stead to make satisfaction to divine justice for their sins and transgressions. This laid a sufficient foundation for their hope of pardon ; with which alone, it was not the divine purpose they should rest contented ; I therefore think they certainly beheld the mediator by faith bringing in that righteousness, and yielding that obedience, which should entitle them to grace here, and glory in a future state. If we proceed no further, we certainly must acknowledge this to be a rich discovery of mercy. viz. First, of the attribute of mercy. Secondly, of the purpose of mercy.

First. Of the attribute of mercy. By this gracious promise the whole intelligent creation clearly saw, that the Lord was a God of mercy ; and though the heavenly inhabitants might not then have so conspicuous a view of the dignity, glory, and sufficiency of the mediator promised, as afterwards they had ; yet they doubted not, (being of the Lord's providing) but that the perfections of the deity dishonored by man's fall and disobedience, would by him be fully glorified ; and man placed in a higher sphere of holiness and bliss, than that he lost through sin. These angelic beings

beings we must suppose, were filled with enlarged conceptions of the divine majesty, holiness, and purity, from the very first moment of their existence ; but how much more so, when the justice of God was so awfully revealed against those who kept not their first estate, as to be consigned over to eternal misery ; wherefore it must be matter of joyful astonishment, when they perceived, that man who sinned also was capable of being recovered ; and yet the display of the divine excellencies in no wise tarnished ; for when may it be said the Lord is glorified, if it be not when his perfections in consistency are displayed ?

Secondly. This first promise is a discovery of the purposes of mercy. But when were they first in the divine mind ? Let the prophet answere this question, *Jerem. xxxi. 3. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* Hence it appears they were eternal. To suppose the contrary is to deny his being ; for with God all things from eternity to eternity are at once present. 'Tis essential to him to be eternal and immutable ; and consequently no change can possibly take place in the divine mind. A succession of purposes are not with him, because he is infinite in wisdom to know what is best, and infinite in power to effect it. But the purpose of mercy flowed from mercy, *Rom. ix. 15.* yet not necessarily.

necessarily. God was not constrained to shew mercy, neither profited by shewing it : for *Job* xxii. 2. *Can a man be profitable unto God?* is a question the Lord himself puts. Again. As the Lord did not purpose to shew mercy unto all ; those in whom his special mercy is revealed, mercy will follow, and will never leave them, until it has set them upon the throne ; and completely delivered them from law, sin, satan, and the world : nay even death itself. How ought we to stand astonished at these things ! Oh, what a mercy was it, for the Lord to shew mercy ! And what a distinguishing mercy, that men, and not angels should be the objects of it ! It passed by them, far more exalted in natural endowments, and thereby better capacitated to glorify God, and caught hold of our nature, so much inferior. Let therefore this wonderful, and divine condescension be more than it is, the matter of our reflection and study ; and be an encouragement to seek for mercy, in the way the Lord hath revealed it.

CHAP. IX.

THE OBJECTS OF MERCY.

Heb. ii. 16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels : but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*

THIE divine Word is the person here spoken of, and is said to take on him not the nature of angels, in order to redeem them from their sin and

and guilt, but the seed of Abraham, even a human nature of Abraham's seed. This condescension was for the purpose of man's redemption, who through Adam's sin was dead 1st. in law, 2d. in sin, and 3d. was under the dominion of satan.

To be dead in the above senses, and to be under the government of such a ruler as satan, is to be in the most abject circumstances ; nay, the condition of such whose case is thus, is so deplorable, that instead of requiring considerable help to co-operate with their endeavors, that they may emerge out of this wickedness, they themselves have not the least strength to desire it, consistent with God's glory.—Now, mercy will be displayed in the behalf of such objects as these, and thereby shine forth more illustriously than if it were only assisting mercy : to suppose some worthiness, and some strength in the objects of divine mercy, is certainly to dishonor this attribute, be that worthiness and strength ever so small. This we ought well to digest, for very important consequences follow a mistake herein. Let us then enquire

First, What it is to be dead in law.

In the definition of such a state, we may say,

First, It is a separation from God's favor.

Secondly, To be under his wrath.

Thirdly, To be bound over to punishment.

The law here referred to, is no less than the

law of God, therefore every offence against it, is committed against him, the great Lawgiver.— Hence when Adam transgressed, he with his whole posterity lost the divine favor, because he not only was obliged to perform an unflinching obedience as a creature ; but by covenant for himself and us, was under an additional obligation to fulfil the divine command. Nay, we are considered in him covenanting. Whence it will follow, that when he sinned, we all sinned also, and incurred with him the like misery. This the Apostle to the Romans clearly maintains, chap. v. 12, 18. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin : and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Or as it is in the margin of our present translation “ in whom all have sinned.” Here he shews the first thing asserted, viz. that we are all by Adam’s first offence become violators of God’s covenant, and unfaithful to our maker ; falling under the same awful penalty with himself.— For it is added, therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, plainly evincing, that God’s justice became our enemy ; since his law was violated, his Majesty, affronted, his holiness dishonored, and his goodness despised. Wherefore the creature was rejected, and cast out of favor, as being now worthless, and contemptible ; having defeated the very end of its existence. Being thus separated from the divine

divine favor, it lost for ever, first all true happiness; secondly, the enjoyment of all good. That the happiness of man was extinct when he lost the divine favor, is plain; because nothing short of it is capable of satisfying his enlarged, and unbounded desires, though it be the tendency of corrupt nature to centre in the creature; yet the mind of man never finds any solid satisfaction therein, but is always thirsting after something, which he is not in the possession of; and the more of creature enjoyment he attains, the more insatiable his thirst and desire is. Admitting the worldly man perfectly contented, yet eventually his carnal pleasure will turn to his greater misery, and bring him into a tenfold more deplorable condition, than if he had never enjoyed those temporal blessings he hath abused. The good things of this life come with a curse to the man who lives and dies under the condemnation of God's most righteous law. The divine favor is alone that ingredient which can render any thing of time and sense truly beneficial, because it is then enjoyed as a pledge and token of that boundless love, which the Lord bears towards his people, consequently will be used to the glory and praise of the giver. Such was the case with Adam in his estate of innocence. We are not therefore to esteem a man happy, who forsaking God, seeks contentment in the creature; for though he be

drenched in sensual pleasure, yet it is but fallacious and delusory, and cannot be esteemed true pleasure and happiness. That man is not so feelingly miserable in this world as he will be in another under the pain of loss, may be attributed to his insensibility of the worth thereof ; yet his blindness renders not his loss the less : hence his state is the same, though his feelings may be different. Were the eyes of men now fully opened to perceive what they have forfeited, they would be as wretched in this world as in the next, provided there were no hope of redemption. Secondly, man being separated from the divine favor lost the proper enjoyment of all good. “ Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works ;” are the words of the wiseman, *Eccles.* ix. 7. Evidently implying, that without divine acceptance we do not properly enjoy even the necessaries of life : how much less then the superfluities thereof ! Besides, as all things work together for good to them who are the objects of God’s favor ; *Rom.* viii. 28. on the contrary they who are condemned by his law, are in all that they use and possess, nay in every circumstance that attends them, accursed ; this appears from *Gal.* iii. 10. compared with *Deut.* xxviii. 15. hence without the chief good, we cannot properly enjoy any good ; for we do not rejoice in it to God’s glory, but dishonor.

nor. Let no one mistake the design of this observation: It is certainly our duty to make use of, and to be employed about the things of this present state, and not to neglect them; because we cannot (according to the drift of our present subject) rightly, and to God's glory enjoy them.— What we here intend is to shew our utter misery as creatures condemned by law; that mercy may appear to be mercy indeed in our pardon and salvation, for it doth not shine forth so illustriously, as infinite mercy, when it is displayed on those who are not utterly miserable. But to proceed, the loss of the divine favor was attended with the loss of all moral good; for the rectitude in which Adam was first created, was not his nature, but concreated with it; therefore it was no more than a fitness, by which he might be capable of answering the end of his existence. Had it been his nature, he then would have ceased to be, when he ceased to be holy. Had he been created immutably holy he would have possessed what is peculiar to deity, which implies a contradiction: and if we suppose that by the power of God, he had been placed beyond the possibility of a change, his fidelity could not have been tried. It may be asked, in what way did he lose his moral rectitude when he first transgressed? Why should he from that time be incapable of any future obedience? How he lost this power, is a matter we are not curiously

ously to pry into ; yet some have thought it was the unavoidable and necessary consequence of a being deprived of God's love, and falling under his anger and displeasure. Says Marshall in his Treatise on Sanctification, pag. 21. " I have often considered by what manner of working any sin could effectually destroy the whole image of God in the first Adam ; and I conclude, it was by working first an evil guilty conscience in him, whereby he judged that the just God was against him, and cursed him for that one sin.— And this was enough to work a shameful nakedness by disorderly lusts, a turning his love wholly from God to the creature, and a desire to be hidden from the presence of God, *Gen.* iii. 8, 10. which was a total destruction of the image of God's holiness. And we have cause to judge, that from the same cause proceedeth the continual malice, rancour, rage, and blasphemy of the devil against God, and Godliness." But to say, why he should lose the divine image is easy, because the scripture authorizes us to affirm, that it was for the punishment of his perfidy and disobedience ; this appears from *Matt.* viii. 22. *John* vi. 25. *Ephes.* ii. 5. *Luke* i. 79. but more particularly from *Rom.* v. 19, 21. which affirms that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. Again.—That sin hath reigned unto death. Yea, our Lord saith, *John* iii. 6. That which is born of the flesh

flesh is flesh, and by many other passages of sacred writ this question is answered. How then doth the guilt of sin, yea even of one single act of sin strike and astonish us ! If Adam's sin had not been an infinite evil, (as we have before proved it was) it would not have introduced such horrible disorder into the human mind, attended with such awful and tremendous consequences, as above-noticed. But

Secondly, We are under divine wrath and displeasure, that is, become expos'd to the full demands of impartial justice for the dishonor, cast by sin on those divine perfections, we were by nature bound to glorify : wherefore to be condemned by the law, is not to be deprived of all good only, but to be subject to all evil. Hence the evil of innumerable afflictions, in this world ; and at last the dissolution of our present being.— Divine Justice is jealous for the honor of infinite holiness and goodness, and is not pleased that sin be attended with the loss of good only, but requires that perpetual suffering should be the unavoidable consequence thereof. What our true state is through Adam's guilt, is evident from *John* iii. 36. “ And he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” If then, we be sentenced to future wrath, certainly we are even now under wrath though the fruits thereof here, are but shadows of what shall be

be hereafter. When the justice of God became our enemy, it pronounced its sentence on us; both for time and eternity. Though the sentence be not fully executed, the nature of it is not altered. Our sufferings here (if not in Christ) are part of the penalty, and a prelude to what shall be hereafter: wherefore all our afflictions, diseases, pains, accidents, and disappointments, whether in mind, body, or estate, point out to us this truth; that we are dead in law, and that God is angry with us every day. See *Psalm vii. 11.* But our utter wretchedness, as under his displeasure, appears in that the guilt of Adam's transgression only, were we chargeable with no other offence, binds us down under his eternal vengeance, as is proved more largely in our sixth chapter. Wherefore

Thirdly, That we are also bound over to eternal punishment, is a truth that divine scripture abounds in the proof of. *Rom. vi. 22, 23.* *But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* Which freedom from sin, is not only a deliverance from the power and dominion of indwelling sin, but from the guilt of every actual sin whatsoever, yea of all sin: then the Apostle adds, *For the wages of sin is death;* that is, not only the wages of a course of sin, but of every individual act of sin, that men may be guilty of; this the same inspired penman confirms from *Rom. i.*

32. Who knowing (says he) *the judgment of God* (that they which commit such things are worthy of death) *not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*: especially if considered in conjunction with the following passages, viz. *Gen. iii. Deut. xxvii. 26. Hab. i. 13. Psalm v. 4, 5, 6. John iii. 36. Rom. v. 18. Ephes. ii. 3, 12.* How awful then was our fall in Adam ! From what a state of bliss and happiness ! And into what a gulph of woe and misery are we all plunged ! Surely if it does not yet it ought to beget in us the greatest concern ! Are we creatures, and hath infinite justice a claim against us ? How do we think to answer it ? Can we endure what it requires ? If we had offended a finite being only, we finite beings might yield satisfaction : but when we consider the injured party is the eternal Jehovah, this at once removes all hope, and fixes us in the most wretched state of despair and misery. Who can deliver us out of this awful condition ? Can a meer perfect man do it ? No. Can an angel ? No. Can the brightest and noblest archangel ? No, by no means: but cannot a super-angelical creature united to the nature of man effect this mighty work ? Surely such a creature, though all the excellencies of the heavenly host were centred in him, yet he would be found insufficient to atone for one offence against the boundless majesty of the great God ! What then O my soul must be

the glory of him, that hath not only paid down the full price of one offence, but of the every offence of the whole ransomed throng ? The answer is plain : for no one less than the only begotten of the father could go through with so arduous an undertaking. Nay, none but Jehovah our righteousness, *Jer.* xxiii. 6. could have completed so great a work. But this is not all ; for we are not only dead in law through our first head, but

Secondly, We are dead in sin. Very few will allow this humiliating truth. They will acknowledge man's nature by the fall is wounded and diseased, but not morally dead. Nay, some are so bold as to affirm, that we come into the world as a *charte-blanche* ; and that we become sinners only by imitation : hence the doctrine of man's merit and free-will, of sincerity and repentance previous to faith and grace. But how will you reconcile these points, and the doctrines produced from them with the oracles of truth ? Does not the Apostle Paul say *Ephes.* ii. 10. that he as well as the believing Ephesians, was God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus ? And doth not he affirm chap. iv. 24. that the new man is created in righteousness and true holiness ? This we readily allow say the enemies to Calvinism, but the word create doth not mean always a production of something out of nothing ; neither by the new man is intended to express something which before did not

not exist. I answer, supposing the former to be true, how do you prove the latter ? Does not the Apostle affirm *Rom.* vii. 18. that in his flesh, which in chap. vi. 6. he calls his old man, dwelt no good thing ? For I know, says he, that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing : now if in his flesh dwelt no good thing, and there was a time when he was in the flesh, or wholly flesh, as appears by *Rom.* vii. 5. then it is undeniably evident, that when the Apostle was in this state, which is the common and natural estate of every individual of mankind, he was as incapable of any spiritual act, as a man laid in his grave, is of any action of natural life. Therefore to be dead in sin, is

First, To be without any principle of spiritual good.

Secondly, To be wholly inclined to evil.

This being man's state by nature, he is infinitely more loathsome to the divine purity and holiness, even before actual sin committed, than the most noxious and offensive creature can be to us.

First then, we are destitute of a spiritual principle ; that is, we are without the source or spring of the least motion in heart or mind, that God approves of. That man is not in practice as bad as he might be ; or that one natural man is not so lost to decency, civility, and morality as another,

argues no goodness at all in the heart of any, because the first principle of goodness is wanting ; even supreme love to God : but rather, the difference in natural men is produced by fear of God's judgment and fiery indignation, terror of conscience, false hopes of salvation, and even frequently by a principle of pride, willing to be esteemed a decent, moral, or religious man. The law knows of no goodness in any one that is under it, where love to God is not ; nor will approve of any moral act, as perfectly good in its motive and end, that springs not from a perfect degree of this love. A wicked man may profit his neighbour by his liberality, he may in the eyes of the public be religious, honest, friendly ; nay, surpass the real christian, in his outward and external conduct ; but then he regards not God in all this, neither is properly concerned to advance his glory : all that he looks to, is either his character among men, or to recommend himself to the divine favor by his works done, without any reflection from what motive, or to what end they were performed. Such a character as this falls infinitely short of what is observed in our fourth chapter, touching the requirements of God's holy law : for it is the absolute want of a true motive and aim (which is the case with every unregenerate man) that proves him destitute of all spiritual good.

Secondly, To be dead in sin, is to be fully inclined

inclined to all evil. If the understanding be wholly destitute of true light, what must follow ? Will it not esteem as eligible, what is most pernicious ? The mind thinks not on God, but with horror, therefore is averse to him. The memory chuses not to retain those thoughts, which the mind is so tormented with. And the imagination if it cannot be pleased with God, and the things which relate to him, will entertain itself with every base and impure object : hence the violent and impetuous motion of the will to evil, and the wild and extravagant disorder of the affections ; and so far is the conscience from doing its duty, that it is become so blind, stupid, and insensible, that it cares not for these things unless aroused by the law, and spirit of God : and even then, unless effectually stirred up, it will frighten and alarm the soul, but not properly direct and guide it ; nay, will be so guilty of blunders and mistakes touching the true way of recovery out of this miserable condition, that it will inevitably prompt it on to such steps as will certainly end in the soul's final ruin. It is from these workings of conscience spring both the gross, and more refined instances of self-righteousness we have in the world : because conscience before truly renewed, will, if not wholly reject, yet certainly pervert the gospel to the soul's destruction, and stimulate the man to seek salvation by a legal righteousness ; yet as it increases

increases in light from the spirit of God through the law, will drive the man from every supposition that God is satisfied. Whilst any one is under these operations, such may be constrained from a principle of self-love to do many things materially good, nevertheless his mind will be still wholly averse to God, and full of enmity towards him: this the scriptures witness. *Rom. viii. 7, 8. The carnal mind is enmity to God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:* so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God; for the more conscience is enlightened to know of God, the more the heart frets against him; which evidently shews that the natural temper and bias of the heart inclines unreservedly to evil, which never more strikingly appears, than when the man is divested of every false hope; or when the spirit of the Lord through the law, ceases to alarm the conscience. Having proved that the natural man doth nothing aright, and that all the internal motions of his powers are improperly inclined; we may fairly conclude him dead in sin, for the natural operations of the human faculties are morally good, or evil, according as they are directed; for man would not be man were he void of all action whatsoever. More might be observed on this head, but I pass on to shew

Thirdly, That man as fallen is under the dominion of Satan. This truth our Lord himself has confirmed,

confirmed. *Luke xi. 21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.* Which observation is expressive of the completest rule; and the most perfect subjection. If a prince or sovereign can command the hearts of his subjects, he hath nothing to fear, his throne is established, fixed and permanent. Peace and delight, though under the wrath of God, and in a state of sin, is the most glaring proof of satan's power in the heart; and whilst a man remains in such ease and content, there is not the least distant prospect of salvation. Were not the spirit of the Lord by his law to hold men within bounds, satan would exercise the same power over their actions; and effectually prompt them to the most atrocious crimes: but herein though his power be great, yet it is limited; nevertheless, this limitation mankind by nature are not entitled to. The Lord thus restrains, that he might fulfil his purposes of mercy; and especially for the salvation of the elect. Whence come all the wars, murders, thefts and rapine, that are in the world? Though they come from the human heart yet think you satan hath no hand in all this? Certainly he hath. If not, how should he be styled our enemy, *Matt. xiii. 28. 1 Pet. v. 8. The god of this world. 2 Cor. iv. 4. The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience? Ephes. ii. 2.* Hence it is plain, that this foul spirit is continually

nually brooding on the evil heart of man ; and many times hatches the most abominable iniquities. His power is evidenced

First, By deceit. Secondly, By violence.

First, His power is evidenced by deceit. This is obvious in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. *Act*s v. 3. Yea he is the deceiver of the nations. *Rev.* xx. 8. And by this method he generally prevails ; this we are not to wonder at, since hereby he at first ruined all mankind at once. But if deceit will not do, he will

Secondly, Use violence. *Peter* exhorting believers, says, 1 *Pet.* v. 8. *Be sober be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.* Hence his darts of diffidence, *Gen.* iv. 13. *Matt.* iv. 3. yea his atheistic and blasphemous suggestions. against which sudden attacks of this potent enemy, see *Paul's* exhortation. *Ephes.* vi. 16. “ Above all, (says he) taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” ‘Tis through him, next to indwelling sin, that the world is so dangerous and hurtful.— How do the objects around us captivate and enslave our minds ? Do you think satan is not concerned in this ? Though man by nature be wholly sensual, and is contented to live here for ever ; yet the many horrid iniquities that the men and things of the world induce the human heart to perpetrate

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are through the subtle and powerful workings of satan, both on the tempters and tempted ; so that he tempts one man, to tempt another, and at the same time, through his secret, but powerful operations on the pride, covetousness or impatience of the latter, he generally obtains a compliance. In this world we are subject to pain, afflictions, crosses, and disappointments as the proper desert of our first apostacy from God : there the enemy mightily improves. If Adam in a state of natural and moral rectitude stood not, what advantage think ye, must this insidious and powerful spirit have over us, who are not only dead in law and sin, but subject to natural weakness and imbecilities ; and also liable to a multitude of external evils and distresses ? I would now close this chapter with the following question. If man through the fall, be dead in law, and dead in sin, subject to the entire dominion of satan, and for every offence deserving everlasting punishment, what becomes then of the doctrines either of condignity or congruity ? As he performs not what the law enjoins, the first he cannot pretend to : and as he is ungodly in all he doth, being dead in sin, where is his meetness to receive grace ? First principles can contribute nothing to their own existence. Not a single atom in the creation co-operated with God to give itself being ; nor will our reason allow it ; for no being can act before it is : and it

remains as inconsistent to suppose that the non-existence of life should contribute to life. Can a dead carcase quicken itself? If not, how can a soul dead in sin, by any thing it can do, render itself meet for justifying and sanctifying grace? Says Perkins, vol. 1, pag. 101. "That which is
 " a deadly enemy to goodness, and is directly re-
 " pugnant thereto, the same desireth not that
 " which is good; but the will is an enemy and
 " directly repugnant unto goodness. *Rom. viii.*
 " 7. The wisdom of the flesh is hatred against
 " God: for it is not subject to the law of God
 " neither indeed can be." Man being thus circumstanced, how wonderfully is mercy glorified in his salvation! Were his condition less miserable, he would have somewhat whereof to glory, and might say he contributed something to his deliverance; which if he had not yielded, grace would not have been sufficient for that purpose.—Now as the power of God is displayed in the creation of something out of nothing; so doth the mercy of God reveal itself, in the acceptance and new creation of dead sinners. The design of this chapter was not to treat of the sovereignty of God, in shewing mercy on the elect, to the rejection of the rest; but rather to point out the utterly wretched and miserable circumstances of every individual of Adam's posterity; and consequently of the Lord's elect people in their unregenerate estate,

estate, as fit subjects for the display of infinite, undeserved, and unmerited mercy ; and the exceeding riches of God's power and goodness in their acceptance to divine favor, their regeneration and spiritual life ; to the end that the Father, Son, and Spirit may be properly honored in their faith and salvation ; and the creature left entirely without matter of boasting. That we may be convinced the scriptures pursue this end, let us adduce a few passages thereof. In respect to acceptance and justification what is its language ? The Apostle Paul will soon satisfy us. *Rom.* iii. 27, 28. " Where is boasting then ? It is excluded. By what law ? Of works ? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." — Again. *Gal.* iii. 22, 26. " But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe ; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And as if this were not enough to manifest the Lord's intention, he adds in another place, *1 Cor.* i. 27, 31. " But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen ; yea and things which are not to bring to nought things which are, that

no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption :" to which is subjoined the reason,—“ That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” If these things be true, how ought we to be penetrated with a sense of our condition ! A vain supposition of our own goodness is the greatest enemy to the honor of mercy and to salvation through it. Pride is a great adversary to God’s glory, and no small impediment to man’s salvation ; especially that which is of a spiritual kind. Though conviction be not saving, yet all those whom mercy saves are first convinced. Therefore soul be assured, that whilst thou hast an high opinion of thy worth and ability, the word of truth thou wilt contemn. If Christ came to save sinners, surely thou wilt not apply to him to save thee, who art righteous in thine own eyes ! Thou mayest indeed apply to him after thine own fashion, but thou hast cause to fear he will reject thine application. If he saves he chuses to have all the honor. Christ doth not save in part, but freely, fully, and everlastinglly. If thou bring (according to thine own esteem of thyself) a little merit, is mercy then free ? By no means. If a little ability, then wilt thou dishonor truth, which declares that thou art spiritually dead. 'Tis not a

new creation, but that thy old nature may be mended is what thou seekest. Art thou better than Paul, who though an Apostle, yet declared he was carnal and sold under sin. *Rom. vii. 14.*— Oh! be concerned to know then the true state of thy condition, how condemned and helpless thou art; and then wait on mercy, where she is to be found, that she may exalt thee in due time.

C H A P. X.

THE MEDIUM OR CHANNEL OF MERCY.¹

Luke i. 78, 79. Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

IN this passage is obviously exhibited the origin, nature, wisdom, and fruit of mercy. Were we to consider the antiquity of mercy, the covenant of redemption before all worlds, the exhibition of God's mercy in the types, sacrifices, and promises under the first dispensation; these would swell this little tract beyond the intended limits. Our purpose is not to enter so largely into this subject, but to shew how God is glorified in his divine perfections, through the display of his rich mercy. That this might be done, it appears

pears some medium or channel was necessary.— This divine medium scripture informs us to be no less a person, than that Divine Word which in the beginning was with God, and was God: even the only begotten of the Father, incarnate in our nature. *John i. 2, 3, 14.* To prove this personal existence before all worlds, his co-eternity and co-equality with the divine Father, the unity of his person in our nature, the distinct subsistence of the two natures in that one person shall not attempt, but consider as granted. However, if any one should doubt of these things, let him take heed lest he be convinced too late of their truth. Nevertheless I would add that it is necessary we should be persuaded, that from the unity of his two natures in one person, whatsoever appertained to or was done by the one nature, is reciprocally attributed to the other. Hence our Lord saith, *John iii. 13.* “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” As the Son of God, he was then in heaven; but not as the Son of man: yet on account of the personal union, Christ as Son of man was then in heaven, even as he is now on earth. *Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I* (says he) *in the midst of them.* *Matt. xviii. 20.* Paul in his charge to the elders of Miletus, saith, *Acts xx. 28.* *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock,*

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over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood : implying, that what Christ's human nature did and suffered, is esteemed in point of merit and efficacy as done and suffered by the divine. Wherefore this glorious medium of mercy is the Lord Jesus Christ, who answered to the character given of the Messiah : this is manifest from *Matt. i. 20,--23.* " But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife ; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,—Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us." How should we stand amazed at this astonishing condescension ! If the Lord had visited a world of perfect creatures, how great the stoop ! But to dwell amongst those who had ran in debt to his justice ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay ; yea such as were living in sin as their element ; and to reside in the midst of them in the likeness of sinful flesh. All language fails to express this condescension. Nay

to aim at the full conception of it, would be presumption itself. What therefore becomes us, is to admire and adore, that eternity should become time, the creator and sovereign of the universe a creature, and the infinite Jehovah a babe in the manger ; add to which, that this divine personage should dwell and converse with sinful mortals.— However when we reflect on the Lord's purpose in this divine transaction, that it was to give light to them that sat in darkness, and to guide our feet into the way of peace, how resplendent doth mercy shine forth in this divine gift ! Surely it was tender mercy indeed, that rather than sinners should perish for ever, God's Son, even his only begotten Son is given for them ! When we consider the unloveliness of the objects beloved, and the greatness of the gift, it seems as if it were the highest instance of God's compassion : for God so loved the world, faith our blessed Savior, that he gave his only begotten Son, *John* iii. 16. that is, without a comparison, greater than which could not be shewn. But it appears free and unmerited, inasmuch as fallen angels were rejected ; and also many of the human race uninterested in it so as effectually to be brought unto glory. Above all things therefore let us be concerned to know, and prize this blessing. Rest not contented O my soul without an interest therein ! Meditate on the dignity, and value of the Savior, and his suitableness

ness to thy condition. Pray to know him effectually, according to the purposes for which he was revealed, and stop not short of a true and superlative affection for him.

C H A P. XI.

THE GLORIFICATION OF THE DIVINE MERCY IN THE SURETISHIP OF CHRIST.

Psalm lxxxix. 19. I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

AS the Lord is but one in nature, an infinite, immutable, pure, and simple being; that is not made up of parts and passions: therefore we are not to judge of his attributes and excellencies as we would of the properties of a creature; for all things are in God in the concrete and abstract. Hence it is said God is light, God is love, *1 John i. 5. iv. 16.* consequently holiness, justice, mercy. "Nay, fays *Turretine*, without doubt the attributes of God are innumerable; yet what is chiefly revealed to us, is that he is one eternal, chief, infinite, immutable, simple, wise, &c. Spirit." *Compend. Theol.* page 72.—Wherefore 'tis plain there can be no disorder in his perfections; neither is it possible there should be in the display of them; for the one would be inconsistent with his nature, and the other with his glory.

Seeing then that whatsoever is in God as an attribute, is God ; to reveal his mercy in the salvation of sinners, to the expence of justice and holiness, would not be to declare himself what he is ; neither would the mercy of God appear to be such. If then this divine attribute only shines forth in all its proper splendor and resplendency when glorified in strict harmony with all the revealed moral perfections of God, how exalted then is it in the suretiship of Christ ! Nay how else could it be at all exalted ? It is too curious a question which some put, whether the Lord could have saved fallen man without a surety ; because it is not for us to determine what infinite wisdom and power could effect ; yet we may ask such enquirers in our turn, whether the gift of God's Son was not the greatest gift God could bestow ? And how it was it should be bestowed if not necessary ? If no answer be given, let then all such queries as the former for ever subside, until we can point out some other method which would effectually have secured God's glory and man's salvation ; which to attempt to do, would be to the last degree daring and presumptuous. That mercy is glorified through Christ's suretiship, I suppose none can doubt that read the scripture. What faith it ? " Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? he retaineth not his an-

ger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.—*Micah* vii. 18. 'Tis then added verse 20, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old. Compare this with *Luke* i. 69. to the close, and it will appear beyond contradiction: Upon Christ's engagement all the saints which died before his incarnation, were taken to heaven; for the Lord was pleased to trust the mediator for payment of what law and justice required until the time appointed to make good his covenant engagement, God the Father accounting it as already done. This sufficiently evinces the sublimity, and co-equality of Christ's person, it being impossible that one so glorious should not fulfil, even to the utmost tittle what he had promised. Wherefore the church, from the earliest ages was considered, as in the hands of Christ their chosen Savior and deliverer: for it is said of Moses, *Heb.* xi. 26. *That he esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.* To imagine then that mercy was in no wise displayed until Christ's accomplishment of his undertaking, is weak and futile, for he who had covenanted with the eternal Father was no less than co-equal with him. How gloriously then is mercy exalted in the gift of such a surety! Indeed it is the highest instance of mercy. This made an inspired apostle cry out with rapture and astonish-

ment, 2 Cor. ix. 15: *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!* Content not therefore thyself O man, with crude and undigested thoughts of mercy, which hath proved a fatal error to thousands, but be solicitous to know in what channel it flows. God will not regard thy cries if thou regard not his Christ. Canst thou think he loves his own glory less than thy salvation? Though he be mercy in the abstract, yet to the wicked he is also a consuming fire. Heb. xii. 29. If thou art totally at a loss to reconcile these extremes, surely thy hopes of mercy are vain and delusive be thy sense of misery what it may. But if thou seest that thou hast no worthiness, no meetness for acceptance, and seek mercy as mercy, for Christ's sake only, as the alone way to a reconciled God, then surely thou art blessed, yea and shalt be blessed.

C H A P. XII.

THE DISPLAY OF DIVINE WISDOM AND POWER IN THE GLORIFICATION OF MERCY, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

1 Cor. i. 24. *Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

THE idea of a substitute or surety, necessarily implies a transfer or imputation: and amongst men it takes place upon a supposed inability

bility or incapacity of the person, for whom any one is a surety. Daily experience shews, that one person is prosecuted for the debt of another, in consequence of a prior covenant or agreement; and the surety, the principal becoming insolvent, is properly esteemed the debtor. The propriety hereof in civil affairs all men allow, but some there are, in divine matters, who count this foolishness: such are they who deny the Lord Jesus Christ to be more than man, and explode the doctrine of his satisfaction in behalf of sinners.— They think if a man be not saved by his own sufferings and obedience, he cannot be saved at all; and therefore suppose the only benefit derived from the Messiah is his perfect example both in doing and suffering. Hence the doctrines, that God could justly pardon sin without any satisfaction. That Christ by his death did not satisfy for us, but only obtained power for us to satisfy for ourselves by our faith and obedience. That Christ died on his own account, having assumed the mortality and infirmities of our nature. That death eternal is nothing else but a perpetual continuance in death or annihilation. Doctrines most shocking; and as widely different from the tenor of sacred writ, as the poles are asunder. Maxims similar to which, are frequently attendant on the denial of the propriety of divine suretyship and imputation; neither will any one properly perceive this propriety who denies sin to be an infinite evil.

Thought

Though the grand truths touching the person, offices and redemption of Christ be writ in the divine oracles as with a sun-beam, and need not a long train of arguments for their proof and elucidation; being obvious on inspection and in themselves evidential of the infinite malignity of man's guilt; yet seeing they have been most wickedly and foolishly perverted by the judicially blind and ignorant, we would not forego any proper argument for their vindication and defence; of which kind we may justly esteem the following truth: that if God created all things for his glory, then sin is an infinite evil, because committed against him. Here it is necessary to make a digression, that the term evil as applied to sin, may not be misunderstood, since the weight of the argument depends thereon; for if we make no distinction between sin and the evil of sin, we may then say the law or rule is limited, therefore the evil of sin is limited; and so consider both sin and its evil as subjective: but as there are innumerable passages of scripture, which declare every sin to be committed against God, the great lawgiver, we conclude then that the law shews the sin, and being committed against God, whose law is thereby violated, declares the evil thereof. The term sin is wont to be understood by the Greek word *Ανομία*, signifying a deviation, or aberration from the law, and the evil thereof by the Latin word *reatus*, guilt; but as the word guilt hath various meanings,

by the evil of sin therefore we would all along be understood to intend, that the subject of the least sin or deviation from the law, is deserving or liable to be punished in proportion to the dignity of the law-giver; and that the increase of such guilt will be in proportion to the number and greatness of sins committed: as for example. If a rational creature fails to express, but in one act, a supreme and entire love to God, he is deserving of eternal punishment: but if he openly blaspheme God, or violate the law repeatedly, he merits not only an eternity of punishment, but such a degree of eternal punishment, as is proportionate to the number and atrociousness of his offences. Now if the glory of God required that Adam and his posterity should be punished for original and actual sin, according to the observation here made, can we suppose that any created being could have devised by what means man might be again reconciled to God, and yet the divine perfections in no wise dishonored? For the very nature of man's desert implies his insufficiency to make ample satisfaction to justice by suffering. Hence the wisdom and power of God are glorified in the revelation of mercy, his wisdom in devising a way, and his power in effecting it. First the wisdom of God is glorified in devising a way wherein mercy might be honored. They who are in no wise tender of the honor of the divine attributes, make no difficulty

culty to determine in this matter. One has this system, and another that; but whatever plans men adopt, if they differ from the Lord's way, you may be assured they will all be found upon proper scrutiny to dishonor, rather than glorify the divine perfections and excellencies. One denies the Savior entirely. Another tells us he is but a meer man. Whilst a third would persuade us, that he is a super-angelical creature united to a human body. By these schemes what is become of God's glory? And wherein doth the evil of sin appear? I don't know why each sinner might not by suffering have satisfied for his own sin, as well as a super-angelical creature have satisfied for the offences of all that shall be saved. The great evil or guilt of Adam's original transgression, says a certain author, is clearly evinced by its being punished with the loss of the divine image: nay, and I am apt to think it is a proof of its infinite evil; but men in general do not believe it, since they suppose every man to have a principle of good in him, and may thereby if not wanting to himself be saved; just as if the punishment of sin was not rejection from God, but only chastisement; and therefore if men labor to do what they can, they shall be saved: nay, salvation they shall obtain, if their good deeds do but outweigh their bad ones, and they endure also tribulation with patience. By these principles, neither the holiness, justice,

justice, truth, nor mercy of God appear to be what they are; but rather finite and limited. But to return: the wisdom of God in redemption is displayed,

First, In the mediator's person.

Secondly, By the two distinct natures in that person.

First, In the mediator's person is displayed the infinite mercy, and wisdom of God. His wisdom that so fit, and his mercy, that so great and glorious a personage should be chosen for the purpose of man's redemption. Who can suppose, be man's guilt and misery ever so great, that this Redeemer of whom we treat, is not sufficient to bear it away; seeing he is no less than that Divine Word, which was with God, and was God. *John i. 1.*— If the eternal Jehovah become a surety, and he will atone for man's transgression, surely the atonement must be sufficient! For though we may apprehend in measure the nature of our guilt, yet his dignity is infinitely beyond all human thought. Whatever the justice and holiness of God require, he can yield, and whatever the misery and want of man may be, the one he can redress, and the other supply. Nay, there is no end to his dignity, power, and sufficiency, both for the honor of God, in all his revealed perfections, and the salvation of man from the depths of extreme misery.

fery. But that this might be effected Divine Wisdom was pleased,

Secondly, That this glorious person should assume man's nature ; for it was impossible that Deity should obey, much more suffer. This he did that the law which still abode in full force, might be amply satisfied in all its requirements ; for justice regarded not man's weakness to sustain the punishment due, nor holiness made any abatement on account of man's total incapacity of a moral kind to yield obedience. Whence it is evident, that to reject the doctrine of imputation, is to deny the truth, on which all our hopes of salvation depend, and to disclaim all and every kind of benefit that can result from this most illustrious instance of divine condescension and mercy ; nay, to cast the greatest dishonor on the wisdom of the Most High. Though it becomes not man to determine what the Lord might or could do, yet we may safely ask our fellow mortals these questions, viz. Whether the Lord hath not created all things for his glory ? Whether infinite majesty and holiness be not dishonored by sin and the fall ? If the sinner be finite, and his guilt infinite, what atonement can be made unless his sins be imputed unto another ? If not, how should mercy be displayed at all ? To think of God and his perfections, or the glorification of them, as we reflect on those graces or virtues in ourselves

which

which have some faint resemblance thereof, is not to conceive of God, but of an idol, a fiction of our own brain, and tends not to his glory, but dishonor. Besides, no perfection in Jehovah can be considered but in harmony with all the rest; neither can any one divine attribute be glorified if another be injured; for says Zanchy, vol. 2, page 50, “*Revera autem in Deo accidentia non sint neque naturales passiones, aliudve quippiam ab essentia illius diversum; eas tamen Deus, quo melius suam nobis naturam patefaceret, sibi attribuere in sacris literis confuevit.*” i. e. Certainly they are not accidents, nor natural passions in God, nor something distinct from his essence; nevertheless, the Lord in his holy oracles frequently attributes them to himself, that he might the better discover his nature to us.—Consequently to assert, that the holiness and justice of God may be dishonored in order that mercy may be displayed, is to deny even mercy as well as holiness and justice. But to return. Wherein doth the impropriety of a divine surety, or the imputation of our sins to him, consist? Surely no creature can profit God! This would argue mutability in the immutable Jehovah. The highest end a creature can answer, is faintly to point out some few of the divine excellencies. The inanimate creation declare his infinite wisdom and power. The perfect and intelligent creation shew forth his greatness, love,

and goodness. Sinners, in their punishment, his infinite justice and power. And if the Lord hath devised a way wherein all the divine perfections may harmoniously shine forth with redoubled lustre, in the salvation of the completely wretched, is not the end of their creation answered who are the subjects of such rich grace? Certainly the glory of God is more displayed by Christ, as a Redeemer and Savior, than ever hath already been or ever will be by the whole intelligent creation to eternity: therefore all the objections against this plan of infinite wisdom spring from the proud and presumptuous will of man, which would fain aim at independency, not willing to be a subject, but a self-sufficient agent; not an instrument, but an efficient, capable of itself to produce something worthy of divine acceptance. This inclination of mind argues great blindness touching man's desert and inability; and the profoundest ignorance of the divine prerogative of Jehovah, who not only is supreme to command and require obedience, but asserts himself to be the author and giver of every perfect gift, and assures us in his word, that without his mercy and grace we are under the absolute dominion of sin and death. *James i. 17. John v. 25. John iii. 6.* If this be our awful case, with what splendor then did divine wisdom shine forth in this glorious assumption of our nature! Man by sin had dishonored

nored God and ruined himself; wherefore by man's nature all things must be restored. *Psalm* lxix. 4. Was Adam a federal head, and did we sin in him? And are not the elect of God considered in Christ, both when he died and rose again? *Ephes.* ii. 5. If these things be true, God's people can by no means boast in themselves, yet through rich grace they may rejoice in Christ their great head and representative. *Phillip* iii. 3. *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*, is the voice of an inspired apostle; here let it be remarked, that the orginal word here translated rejoice, is the identical word expressed by boasting in *1 Cor.* i. 29. 31. Let us not boast then of the independence and self-sufficiency of the human will, because all such boasting is vain, but rather rejoice in him alone who hath magnified the law and made it honorable. *Isaiah* xlii. 21. For he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, if we be interested in him, who is the God, or near kinsman of all his people, and whose right it was to redeem. Again. Divine wisdom was manifested in Christ being born of a virgin, and therefore could not be considered in Adam as a covenanting head, though descended from him. Hence he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and every way a fit and proper mediator between God and us. As his

human

human nature never subsisted of itself, but always in personal union with the divine word, he therefore was born, he died, rose again and ascended, not in a private but public character, even as the head and representative of his people ; wherefore mystically these things might be attributed to them, as far as respects God's glory and their salvation ; for we are not to suppose that the hypostatic union took place at the birth of Christ, or that it was dissolved at his death ; rather, that he was God-man in one person, both in the womb and in the grave, and all that attended him was of a public and not of a private nature. On his own account personally considered, Christ could not be subject to any law, either touching precept or penalty, because he was above all law, being the Lord thereof ; therefore he was not born, but made under the law for us. This Paul testifies, *Gal. iv. 45. But when (says he) the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Surely mercy, by this great transaction, hath given occasion to wisdom to shine forth in her proper splendor and brightness ! For the whole intelligent creation could not possess the shadow of an apprehension how the eternal, immutable, infinite, and holy God could possibly become subject to his own law, in the precept and

and penalty thereof. Here the greatest extremes meet. "Here is infinite glory, and the lowest humility. Infinite majesty, and the most striking meekness. The deepest reverence towards God, and equality with him. Infinite worthiness and the greatest patience." *Edwards on the Excellency of Christ.* Which demonstratively prove how suitable for his Office. To say more at present would be to anticipate the subject; for divine wisdom not only is exhibited in the person of the Mediator, but also in the whole work of redemption, and will with unremitting rays shine forth resplendent in its fruits and benefits to eternity. Since then the wisdom of God is herein glorified, so

Secondly, is his power. When Moses interceded for the children of Israel upon their murmuring against God by means of the bad report the spies had given of the promised land, he says, *Numb. xiv. 17—21.* "And now I beseech thee let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt,

even

even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Here we see Moses hath a due regard to the justice and holiness of God, and would not plead with the Lord for mercy to the disparagement of these perfections. Nay, the answer he received was suitable to his petition; in which answer the Lord declared himself jealous for his majesty and holiness; for very few who then lived entered the land they had despised; so that their iniquity was severely punished, and the whole earth filled with God's glory, both in a way of justice and mercy. The great and puzzling question to every truly convinced soul is, how can this great and holy God have mercy upon me? But in answer thereto, hear what Moses says, Let the power of my Lord be great, as if he had said, O Lord God! thou who art omnipotent and canst do all things, let it now be seen how great thy power is in this respect, and how able thou art to forgive a people that by so many sins, and so exceedingly great, do still provoke thee. Let thy power to forgive appear, though thou be that God that wilt in no wise clear the guilty! If the wise man declares, *Prov. xvi. 32. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;* the Lord may well reply, *Ifa. l. 2. Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I not power*

power to deliver? As the Lord therefore magnified his power in overcoming his anger and wrath against sinning Israel, so hath he much more magnified his power in laying such a foundation, as is sufficient to sustain thee O troubled soul, from sinking in the ocean of divine wrath and vengeance for ever; the due desert of thy sins. This he hath effected in the person of his Son, through the assumption of our nature; and therein hath struck with astonishment the whole rational creation. The incarnation of the Divine Word, is the glorious effect of the omnipotency of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; terminating not on God considered essentially, but on the person of the Son; and so wonderful was this instance of divine power, that the peculiar properties essential to both natures remained distinct; nevertheless neither before nor after the birth of the human nature was it a person; but at the moment of its existence it was assumed by the Divine Word and united thereto, and therefore never subsisted but in union therewith. Here we see displayed, not only the attributes of divine wisdom and power, but we behold Christ himself in his complete person to be both the wisdom and power of God.— See 1 Cor. i. 24. Says Dr. Guyse on the place, “ This very doctrine of salvation through a crucified Jesus appears, and approves itself to be full of all divine wisdom and power, to them

“ that are effectually called, whether they be
 “ Jews or Gentiles. They see the infinite power
 “ of God in carrying the Redeemer through his
 “ terrible sufferings and death, when he made
 “ his soul an offering for sin ; and in raising him
 “ again from the dead : and they behold adorable
 “ wisdom in the constitution of the person of
 “ Christ God Man, and in the contrivance of
 “ God to secure and exalt the united and har-
 “ monious glory of all his attributes ; together
 “ with the rights of his law and government, in full
 “ consistency with the free pardon, justification,
 “ and eternal salvation of lost sinners, through
 “ the death of his only begotten Son in their na-
 “ ture, and in their room and stead.” Add to
 which the exposition of the Dutch annotators.—

“ Hereby (say they) may be understood, either
 “ the preaching of Christ, or Christ himself who
 “ is called the power and wisdom of God ; be-
 “ cause he is the express image of the Father’s
 “ person, by whom he hath manifested his divine
 “ power and wisdom above all things in the re-
 “ demption of mankind.” Thus in the incarna-
 tion of our glorious surety hath the wisdom and
 power of God opened a sure way for the exalta-
 tion of mercy and goodness, in the salvation of
 sinners ; plunged into the most awful and tremen-
 dous state of wretchedness and misery ; and raised
 them thereby, to the most elevated hopes of ho-
 liness

lines and happiness. Oh ! that our hearts may now be penetrated with a due apprehension of the stupendous power, wisdom, and mercy of our God ! Oh ! that this glorious instance of his divine compassion may convince us, that fury is not in him ! That he is infinitely more ready to receive us, through this way wherein he may be glorified, than we are to come unto him. Think not O thou mourning and law condemned sinner, thou who art crying out what shall I do to be saved, that the Lord is not a God of mercy, because thou art, as it were, overwhelmed with the feelings of his displeasure, and penetrated with convictions of his majesty, holiness, and justice ! Perhaps thou art seeking mercy in a way it cannot be found. Thou art not looking to Jesus, and to God through him. Peradventure thou hast forgot the mediator. O tremble at thy error ! Knowest thou what thou art doing in expecting favor from God without him ? Canst thou imagine God will prefer thy happiness to his own glory ? How would he be the God of love, if he should love thee above himself ? How could his glory be manifested in thy pardon if Christ be rejected ? Nay mercy itself will be thine enemy, if Christ be despised ; and will rejoice in concert with justice in thy destruction.

C H A P. XIII.

TRUTH EXALTED IN THE DISPLAY OF MERCY,
BY A MEDIATOR.

*Deut. xxxii. 4. A God of truth and without iniquity,
just and right is he.*

IF the Lord be true, if truth be essential to his nature, how then should his threatenings against sin and sinners fail of execution ? But the scripture saith, *Jer. x. 10.* “ The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King ; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.” This solemn declaration is corroborated by *1 Thess. i. 9.* *1 John v. 20.* As then he is truth itself, he will certainly make good all that his lips have denounced and spoken ; therefore the redeemed in glory exclaim with exultation, *Rev. xv. 3.* “ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. This leads us to conclude, that there was an absolute necessity in the display of mercy, that the truth of God, or the Lord, as a God of truth with respect to his threatenings should be glorified. The denunciation against

Adam

Adam (in whom we were all considered both ~~se-~~
minally and representatively) was *Gen.* ii. 17.—
“ In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt
surely die.” This curse we all incurred by a
breach of God’s command, in eating of the fruit
forbidden : temporal and spiritual death were the
immediate effects. The first, inasmuch as the
body forthwith became mortal ; and the second
shewed itself immediately by the soul’s averseness
to God and holiness, and absolute tendency to
sensual and earthly objects. Eternal death though
included in the threatening, did not fully take place
at once. Nevertheless divine justice considered
the sinner as dead, in this point of view also, yet
withheld its stroke for a time, that it might fall
with more tremendous weight on the victims of
its vengeance. The guilt of eternal death took
place immediately on the first transgression ; and
through spiritual death man’s debt to justice began
soon to be increased : for being subject to sin in
all the actions of mind and body, he accumulated
to himself wrath against the day of wrath. This
truth our Lord confirms, *Matt.* xii. 36. 37. “ But
I say unto you, that every idle word that men
shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the
day of judgment ; for by thy words thou shalt
be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be con-
demned.” Nay the very sins of the heart shall not
go unpunished. *Jer.* xvii. 9, 10. “ The heart is
deceitful

deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Thus being held by justice as with adamantine chains, we were reserved to the day of God's vengeance, which inevitably would have overtaken every individual of Adam's race, had not the Lord found a ransom: because truth had declared, *Ezek. xviii. 4. The soul that sinneth it shall die.* Now in the surety which infinite wisdom and power hath provided, mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. *Psalm lxxxv. 10.* Nay, truth in reference to God's requirements from man, both by precept and penalty hath more honor in the exaltation of mercy, and salvation of the sinner, than ever it could have had from him in a way of justice and punishment: For

First, Truth declares what man's desert is, as a sinner. This would never have been fully explained by the infliction of punishment on man the offender, because of his finite nature; for he would have always been verifying the Lord's declaration, but would never have verified it. But the divine surety the Lord Jesus Christ, the almighty Savior, he by one offering perfects for ever them that are sanctified. *Heb. x. 14.* Millions of ages of pain and torment the creature might

might be in, would not fully manifest what truth had declared; *Gen. ii. 17. In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Because still a longer duration would be required to explain it, and so on to eternity. But Jesus said, *John xix. 30. It is finished, and bowed his head and gave up the ghost.*—Hath truth declared that sin is odious to God? Oh! How clearly doth it appear in the sufferings of Jesus! Surely in him it is set forth to the utmost, even to the fullest conviction both of angels and men. If nothing then but the atonement of Jesus be sufficient, how thinkest thou O man, that thy repentance polluted with sin will answer this end? Wilt thou atone for thy sins by committing new sins? But supposing the law of God could not charge with the least spot, thy sorrow for former offences; admitting thy cries and tears to be pure and unfullied, how could this sorrow diminish in the least the demerit of thy former crimes? Surely it could not! However, It is more desirable to see men under the workings of a legal repentance, than to see them hard, stupid and careless; but it must be noticed, that to place any hope therein is most fallacious and dangerous. It is a denial of the infinite evil of sin, and the all-sufficiency of Christ's atonement and death; and thereby the God of truth instead of being glorified, is dishonored. To be alarmed, and awakened out of an estate of carnal security, to be convinced of God's

threatning

threatning against sin and sinners, to see ourselves condemned for the sin of our nature, and for the first act of disobedience in our common head Adam, is a necessary and proper though a very painful state of mind; yet to such how proper to say, look O thou burthened soul to a crucified Redeemer! Behold in him the truth of God's denunciation! See in him the demerit of thy offences! What! Would no other sacrifice do? No other atonement suffice? Surely then if for thyself, thou lookest to him by the faith of application and dependence; to him as the gift of the divine Father, and the only way to mercy, grace and glory, how will such a look open all the springs of a genuine and unfeigned love! How wilt thou then repent, with the repentance not to be repented of! Not for life, but from it! Not for pardon, but as the fruit thereof! Surely then thou wilt be to the praise of the God of truth, both in respect to law and gospel whilst thou lookest upon him whom thou hast pierced, and mournest for him, as one that mourneth for his only son. *Zechar. xii. 10.*

Secondly, As truth declaring man's desert as a sinner, is glorified in a way of mercy; so by man's most consummate happiness and felicity doth mercy display it. Man in a state of innocence, was not only void both of sin and sorrow, but was filled with holiness and happiness; not simply exempted from God's displeasure, but very near

unto, and a peculiar favorite of his maker. His enjoyment of his God was every way consistent with the state in which he was placed ; and we have reason to think, that truth had given him to understand, that upon his faithfulness and obedience, he should be translated to a state more noble and exalted ; this seems to be hinted at by many passages of sacred scripture as *Matt. xix. 17. Rom. x. 5. Levit. xviii. 5. Gal. iii. 12.* But it becomes us not to determine whether this would have been absolutely so, or man only confirmed in his paradisaical felicity ; yet this we know, he owed all to God, and could have demanded nothing from him, unless the Lord had laid himself under obligation by promise. Hence we are obliged to confess that by life, and entering into life, truth, under the dispensation of grace, has more clearly explained what is thereby understood ; because through Christ not an earthly, but an heavenly bliss is promised. Wherefore truth appears more exalted by this glorious transaction of mercy through a mediator, in her promise and reward, than she did in the establishment of the first covenant ; for whatever her promise might then be, we are sure of her promise through the righteousness yielded by the mediator. But some will still object, how could mercy thus glorify truth ; seeing the latter had declared death, even eternal death to be the portion of the disobedient ? The answer

is ready. Truth had not declared that God would not have mercy, but only published the demands of justice. The Lord herein is not to be considered in a private, but in a public character ; not as revealing his decree and purpose, with respect to the eternal state of mankind, but as shewing Himself to be the sovereign and governor of the world ; and that it was his good pleasure to glorify his name. Wherefore he preserved his prerogative to deal with offenders as he pleased, either in a way of justice alone, or of mercy in strict harmony with justice. This being the case, truth thro' mercy is in no wise violated, but beams forth with greater brightness. How truth is glorified in the application of gospel blessings, is not the present design ; this may be observed in future. Is then truth so essential to the being and honor of Jehovah ? Hath he said heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away ? *Matt.* xxiv. 35. And are we told *Matt.* v. 18. that one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled ? Beware then O man, how thou neglectest the concerns of thy soul ? What ! Art thou living as if there were no day of account ? Oh reflect, God is a God of truth ! But perhaps thou art one who is awakened to a deep sense of his extreme danger. If this be thy case, I would then ask thee, whither dost thou fly for refuge ? Is thine own seeming worth and ability,

ility, either in whole or in part, thine asylum and sanctuary? Oh take heed that you make not lies your refuge, and hide yourself under falsehood! *Isai. xxviii. 15.* If God be so jealous of his truth that rather than it should be violated he would shed even his own Son's blood, how then canst thou imagine he would save thee to the dishonor of it? Renounce therefore O man thine own worthiness and sufficiency and fly to Jesus, as the alone righteousness and strength of perishing sinners, that divine truth may be magnified. And oh! professor, see to it that thy loins be girt about with truth, *Ephes. vi. 14.* that thou hast a true fight and sense of thy lost state by nature, that thy faith is built on the warrant of truth, and on the sure foundation even the atonement and righteousness of Christ Jesus; that thou truly believest in him, not only as the Savior, but a Savior for thee. Nay, be solicitous to know and be assured that thy faith is productive of love, fear, and repentance: then not only thy state will be safe, but thy joys will increase and abound; and at last an entrance be abundantly administered unto thee, into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *2 Pet. i. 11.*

C H A P. XIV.

JUSTICE IN HARMONY WITH MERCY,
BY CHRIST JESUS.

Rom. iii. 25, &c. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God. To declare I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus.

THE demands of Divine Justice are the grand, and mighty obstacle to the hopes, and happiness of every individual of Adam's fallen race. When the sinner seriously considers the enormous debt he hath contracted, like King Belshazzar, his countenance changes, his thoughts are troubled, and his knees smite one against another.—*Dan. v. 6.* But if this be not the case with some, it is certainly for want of a true and proper conviction of their awful condition, and of the perilous circumstances in which they are. Justice, we must now look upon, as pleading the cause of holiness, and requiring of fallen man all that the law demands. which is

First, Satisfaction for sins against God, the lawgiver.

Secondly,

Secondly, A pure and holy nature.

Thirdly, A spotless and unfinning obedience.

With respect to the first of these requirements; some attribute to justice, which demands it, the name or character of punitive, intending that it is not pleased, but with the punishment of offenders answerable to their crimes. What this punishment is, hath been already handled. That justice takes notice not only of atrocious sins such as blasphemy, murder, and theft, but of offences comparatively small, is not to be questioned; yea of omissions as well as commissions, whether in heart, lip, or conduct, and especially of that fountain of iniquity, which the scripture calls the old man, the law in our members, and the body of sin and death; nay it forgets not that first sin committed in Adam, the spring-head of all the sins with which mankind stand charged: for proof of which let the following passage suffice, 1 John v. 17. *All unrighteousness is sin.* Mercy early foreseeing how wretched and helpless man would be as a victim to justice and wrath, looked with the tenderest compassion and pity; and was resolved to interpose. Wherefore rejoicing to reveal her benignity and kindness, she delayed not even upon the first transgression, to make the gracious promise of a Savior, couched in the denunciation against the serpent. Gen. iii. 15. "And I will put

put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel." On which original promise, the passage of divine writ pre-fixed to this chapter is a comment. But as this portion is asserted by the truly pious in all ages, to contain the doctrines of imputed sin and righteousness ; so there have not been wanting men, who deny it, and who tell us that Christ made no atonement for sin, neither is his righteousness imputed to us. These maintain that it is unreasonable there should be a substitute in this case, or that one person should suffer for another ; but that every man if saved, is to be saved by his own personal obedience. To the matter of fact here denied we shall say nothing ; it being so plain and so often and ably maintained, that it were needless to add more. To affirm that it is irrational is the most consummate presumption and wickedness ; for it is no less an offence, than against mercy itself, and all the divine perfections ; far more heinous than can be committed against the law of God, considered unconnected with mercy. However to support the plausibility of their assertion, the most futile and wicked principles are introduced, that were ever hatched by the spirit of wickedness, viz. That eternal death mentioned in the scriptures is nothing more nor less than an estate of eternal annihilation ; that man before

before his fall had no original righteousness ; that there is no original sin in us, as it imports lust, or deformity of nature ; and that we have such a freewill to goodness, that we may, if we bind our own minds to it fulfil the law in this life. To remove so corrupt a basis, let us attend to the words of our divine master, *Mark ix. 43, 44.* “ And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off ; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched ; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Now if the worm die not, the man is not annihilated, but exists for ever : for that which is non-existent can be conscious of nothing ; and if the fire be not quenched it must burn to eternity. But in reply to the two succeeding particulars, we say, if we are now the subjects of original sin, it is plainly inferred that in our primitive estate we were the subjects of original righteousness. That we are all, at present, the subjects of the former, will be obvious if we refer to *John iii. 6, 7.* where Christ says, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.* If there were no original sin in us, or deformity of nature, how is it we must be born again ? On the contrary, if original pollution overspreads all our powers, it will follow that instead of being the subjects of a freewill to goodness ; all the freedom of will man hath, is

to evil; because the carnal mind is not simply an enemy to God, but enmity against him. *Rom. viii. 7.* If then we allow the propriety of what hath been advanced in this tract, touching God's glory and man's sin; we may safely infer that he was utterly incapable of contributing in the least degree to deliver himself out of his wretched condition. Nay, it doth not appear he could be rescued at all, if the objection of these adversaries be granted. But to shew the impropriety of their pretence, let us consider

First, That God properly is neither profited by the righteousness and happiness, nor injured by the sin and misery of creatures.

Secondly, That all the revenue the creature can yield is, an acknowledgment of the divine excellency, according to his primitive creature capacity. Sin therefore is a denial of that praise, and a representation of God to be what he is not.

Thirdly, When God's majesty is affronted, and his holiness despised, justice defends the divine honor and demands satisfaction from the offending party, and will not be satisfied without full payment. The two first, we have already considered in the entrance to this work. On the last consideration we may observe, that if the demands of divine justice be paid, it will approve of the payment though it be by a surety; and especially, if

if they who first became debtors to justice prove insolvent. Because if God be more abundantly glorified as a God of justice by, and such attributes displayed through, the intervention of a surety, as before lay concealed; surely it cannot but rejoice in the acceptance of him : for the glory of God is the rule of the divine conduct. If then the glory of God require satisfaction, and through a mediator it be more abundantly displayed, how then is it objected that Christ made no atonement for sin ? That it is a violation of justice to transfer the punishment ? And that God could not punish his innocent Son for our sins ? For is justice only an appetite of vengeance, springing from an hatred that is insatiable, but with the destruction of the guilty ? Though a person that is innocent cannot suffer as such justly, yet he may through a voluntary contract. This is esteemed by men, both as wise and just, as the case of hostages evinces.— Though punishment attend sin, yet not always the person of the sinner. Indeed no man hath the absolute power of his own life, being contrary to the law of God and man ; yet herein Christ had full power. *John x. 18. I have power (says he) to lay it down, and I have power to take it again ; this commandment have I received from my Father.* Here he declares his power as God, and subjection as mediator. He knew that he was equal to the great undertaking, and that none but himself

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could deliver : therefore it is added, and I have power to take it again. Whence then in this matter doth justice appear violated ? Christ voluntarily engages, and fulfils his engagement. What is the result ? Is it not that the human nature is dignified with all power both in heaven and earth ; and an innumerable company of sinners made perfectly holy in an eternal state of felicity ; there to extol and exalt the divine perfections for ever, who would otherwise have been the awful subjects of divine wrath, and blaspheming their Creator to endless ages. But still it is objected, how can Christ if he be God make satisfaction ? Would it not be unto himself ? Let the answer be in the words of the noted Doctor Gill :—“ Indeed in case of private satisfaction for a private loss, it would be quite absurd for one to make satisfaction to himself ; but in case of public satisfaction for a public offence to a community, of which he is a part, he may be said, by making satisfaction to the whole body to make satisfaction to himself without any absurdity. A Member of Parliament having violated the rules and laws of the House, when he makes satisfaction for the same to it, may be said to make satisfaction to himself being a member of it. It is possible for a lawgiver to make satisfaction to his own broken law, and so to himself as the lawgiver ; thus Zaleucus, a famous legislator, made a law which punished adultery

" adultery with the loss of both eyes ; his own
 " son first broke this law, and in order that the
 " law might have full satisfaction, and yet mercy
 " be shewn to his son, he ordered one of his son's
 " eyes, and one of his own to be put out ; and so
 " he might be said to satisfy his own law, and to
 " make satisfaction to himself the lawgiver. But
 " in the case before us, the satisfaction made by
 " Christ is made to the justice of God, subsisting
 " in the divine nature, common to all the three
 " persons ; this perfection subsisting in the divine
 " nature as possessed by the first person, is offend-
 " ed with sin, resents it, requires satisfaction for
 " it ; and it is given it by the second person in
 " human nature as God-man ; the same divine
 " perfection subsisting in the divine nature, as
 " possessed by the second person, shews itself in
 " like manner, loving righteousness, and hating
 " iniquity ; affronted by sin, and demanding sa-
 " tisfaction for it, it is given to it by him as the
 " God-man and mediator ; who though a person
 " offended can mediate for the offender, and
 " make satisfaction for him. And the same may
 " be observed concerning the justice of God, as a
 " perfection of the divine nature possessed by the
 " third person, the spirit of God ; the satisfaction
 " is made to the justice of God as subsisting in the
 " divine nature common to the three persons :
 " and is not made to one person only, singly, and

“ separately, and personally, but to God essentially considered in all his persons ; and to his justice as equally possessed by them ; and that as the Lord, Judge, and Governor of the whole world, who ought to maintain, and must and does maintain the honor of his Majesty, and of his law.”—Body of Divin. 2 vol. page 773. As the principal objections against the imputation of man’s sin to Christ, and Christ’s righteousness to the sinner are removed ; let us take a view how justice is glorified in, and through this divine mediator ; and how wonderfully mercy is displayed in shewing pity on the miserable. Did the law then demand

First, A penal satisfaction for sins committed ? Hence we behold the Lord of life and glory yielding to the full, that satisfaction : from the manger to the cross afflicted, and both in body and soul enduring the chastisement of our peace. *Isai.* liii. 5. It is certain when we fell from God, we became subject to all manner of temporal evils, as pain, sickness, and all kinds of diseases from within ; troubles, distresses, losses, and disappointments, perils, and dangers, from without ; being part of that punishment due to our sin. Now Christ though he could not be subject to all the like evils being pure and holy, yet every sinless infirmity he bore as our substitute ; as hunger, thirst, weariness, and such like ; being tantamount to all the evils

evils before noticed, for he was persecuted by Herod, despised by the Pharisees and rulers, in perils frequently by the Jews, and destitute of habitation ; for thus he saith *Matt.* viii. 20. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.* Nay, at last betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, and forsaken by all his disciples ; and because his people had forfeited their natural lives to justice, he was arraigned, condemned, and put to death, even to the ignominious death of the cross. That the curse might be removed from his people, he was made a curse for them, in order that every trouble, affliction, and distress might be sanctified to them ; and their very death be made a blessing. Wherefore St. John the divine saith *Rev.* xiv. 13. “ And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; yea saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” If these things are so, we are not to wonder at the tribulations of this life. If we be destitute of an interest in Christ, they are but the righteous punishment of justice, and the due desert of our iniquities ; though in another world we may suffer to eternity. But if we be interested in him, notwithstanding they are no penal evils, and in reality tend to our benefit ; yet in them as in a glass we may clearly discover how odious

odious sin is in the Lord's sight. Again. Is the function of the law to every offender spiritual death, and eternal death ? Though we must answer in the affirmative, yet God forbid that we should imagine that Christ should be either the subject of the former, or such circumstances should attend him in respect to the latter, as do attend the damned in torment ; such as blasphemy, rage, impotent fierceness of mind. This could not be, because he had no real personal guilt, and because he possessed the most perfect assurance of his own sufficiency and ability to go through the great work which justice required. Nevertheless he endured by a temporary suffering what was equivalent to that punishment, which the whole body of his elect people deserved. Dr. Gill well observes, vol. 2, pages 641, 642. " Now besides this corporal death which Christ endured, there was a death in his soul, though not of it, which answered to a spiritual and an eternal death ; for as the transgression of the first Adam involved him and all his posterity in, and exposed them to, not only a corporal death, but to a moral or spiritual, and an eternal one ; so the second Adam as the surety of his people, in order to make satisfaction for that transgression, and all others of theirs, must undergo death in every sense of the threatening. *Gen. ii. 17.* And though a moral or spiritual death, as it lies in a loss of the image of God, in a privation of original

" original righteousness, in impotence to that
 " which is good, and in an inclination, bias, and
 " servitude of the mind to that which is evil, could
 " not fall upon the pure and holy soul of Christ ;
 " which must have made him unfit for his media-
 " torial work : yet there was something similar
 " unto it, so as to be without sin and pollution ;
 " as darkness of soul, disquietude, distress, want
 " of spiritual joy and comfort, amazement, agony,
 " his soul being sorrowful even unto death, pref-
 " sed with the weight of the sins of his people on
 " him, and a sense of divine wrath on account of
 " them. Eternal death consists in these two
 " things, punishment of loss, and punishment of
 " sense ; the former lies in an eternal separation
 " from God, depart from ye me cursed ; the latter
 " is an everlasting sense of the wrath of God, ex-
 " pressed by everlasting fire. Now Christ en-
 " dured what was answerable to these for a while.
 " He suffered the loss of his Father's gracious
 " presence when he said my God, my God, why
 " hast thou forsaken me ! And he endured the
 " punishment of sense when God was wroth with
 " him, his anointed, when his wrath was poured
 " out like fire upon him, and his heart melted
 " like wax within him. *Psalm lxxxix. 38. and xxii.*
 " 14. and xviii. 5. Eternity is not of the essence
 " of punishment, and only takes place when the
 " person punished cannot bear the whole at once ;

" and

" and being finite as sinful man is, cannot make
 " satisfaction to the infinite majesty of God, in-
 " jured by sin, the demerit of which is infinite
 " punishment; and as that cannot be bore at
 " once by a finite creature, it is continued ad in-
 " finitum; but Christ being an infinite person,
 " was able to bear the whole at once; and the
 " infinity of his person abundantly compensates
 " for the eternity of punishment." Let it suffice
 then that Christ underwent all that punishment
 for nature or quality that was due to us; but for
 degree, let us be assured it was so much, as infi-
 nite justice thought meet to inflict on so great a
 personage. Though the soul of Christ suffered
 immediately by the hand of his divine Father,
 as before observed, *Matt.* vii. 23. *2 Theff.* i. 9.
 and which was the very soul of his suffering, yet
 this was not all; for he must be also exposed to the
 malice and rage of the powers of darkness; un-
 der whose slavery and dominion we had all sold
 ourselves; and by whom we were held captive.—
 This is evinced by his temptations in the wilder-
 ness. To be tempted of Satan certainly was a
 great affliction, even to Christ himself; for as his
 human nature was perfectly pure and holy; and
 possessed with the deepest sense of the majesty,
 and holiness of God, every thing therefore tend-
 ing to the dishonor thereof Christ looked on with
 inconceivable abhorrence. Surely then it grieved
 his holy soul to be solicited by the arch fiend of
 hell,

hell, to the things which he presented unto him ; for we are told, *Heb iv. 15. that he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*— But the sufferings he endured from this quarter when on the cross who can tell ? However this we know, that they must be very great, from Christ's own declaration to the chief priests and elders. *Luke xxii. 53. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me ; but this is your hour and the power of darkness,* not simply in stirring them up to such horrid iniquity ; but the united powers of hell being now at liberty surrounded him, and cast their fiery darts at him. Thus we see the divine Father spared not his own Son ; that there might be no charge left against us guilty rebels : for says Paul, *Rom. viii. 1. There is now no (or not one) condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* How then doth mercy triumph over justice in this divine channel ! And how bright and resplendent doth the righteousness of Jehovah as the supreme Governor of the universe shine forth ! This theme will be the song of the redeemed to eternity : it is begun already but it will never have an end. *Rev. iv. 11. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, (say they) to receive glory, and honor, and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* But it is added, chapter the v. 9, 10, 11, 12. “ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art

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“ worthy

worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders, saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." Now if this be the song of the redeemed in glory, how vain is it then, to dispute about the power of God, what he can or what he cannot do, touching man's salvation! If God had not consulted his glory such a question might have been asked. But some may say, might not God have been glorified in some other way yet man redeemed? How impertinent is such a question! If there had been an easier way, infinite wisdom would have discovered it; for then the God of love would not have bruised his only begotten Son. And to say there is a more expensive way, what is this but to deny the deity of Christ? For it is said, *Ephes. i. 7, 8. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence.*

Secondly, The law demands of us a pure and holy nature. Though Christ by his atonement and

and death hath satisfied for all our sins, both original and actual ; yet justice cannot admit a defiled and impure creature to the enjoyment of an infinitely pure and holy God. 'Tis not enough to be guiltless, but it requires also that we be blameless ; that is without fault or defect. Though the guilt of original pollution be atoned for, yet infinite justice still beholds the fault or defilement.— Regeneration will not do, unless sin were wholly extirpated, Grace puts something in us, doth not take any thing out of us. The old man is the old man still, though debilitated in his operations. Therefore justice cannot look upon us in this life as holy, though in part truly sanctified. The church cries out *Isai. lxiv. 6. We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.*— Yet Christ saith to his spouse, *Cant. iv. 7. Thou art all fair my love there is no spot in thee.* And again, chap. vi. 10. *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.* How can these things accord unless Christ's righteousness imputed to us, include the holiness of his nature ? If the law, yea if the justice of God expect to find in us, or in our surety, what we lost in Adam ; and who will say it doth not ? And if (*Rom. x. 4.*) Christ be the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, how are we presented holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in the sight of in-

finite purity, but in the holiness o' Christ's human nature? For an imputed holiness is as necessary to our complete justification, as an holiness imparted is to our glorification. Now such a purity of nature as the law requires, will never be found inherent in us whilst in the body; for the old man even to the last will remain perfect in all his members; but when he dies will die at once and become utterly extinct. Therefore Christ is made unto us of God, holiness imparitively, and also imputatively, as the ground or basis of the former, this appears from *1 Cor. i. 30.* "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "Christ (says Dr. Gill on the place) is the sanctification of his people, thro' the constitution of God, the imputation of the holiness of his nature, the merits of his blood, and the efficacy of his grace; Christ is the sanctification of his people imputatively, as the holiness of his human nature is together with his obedience and sufferings imputed to them for their justification." Again. "Christ assumed an holy human nature, the holiness of it was not merely a qualification for his office as a Saviour, or what made his actions and sufferings in that nature significant and useful, or is only exemplary to men; but is a branch of the saint's justification before God. The law required an holy

" holy nature, theirs is not holy ; Christ has assumed one not for himself but for them. and so is the end of the law, in all respects." See Perkins, vol. i. page 83.

Thirdly, The law requires a spotless and unsinning obedience. This some call an active obedience in contradistinction to a penal satisfaction made for sins committed. This active obedience the law looks for, both in heart and life. *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments.* Matt. xix. 17. is a proof of our assertion. But the witeman faith *Eccles.* vii. 20. *There is not a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not.* Nay the beloved apostle declares 1 John i. 8. *If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:—* Now it follows that they who militate against Christ's active obedience imputed to his people, deprive both themselves and others, as far as in them lies, of celestial happiness ; because to be delivered from punishment only will not constitute a man righteous. Though this be a truth yet we must allow, that there were many things in Christ's obedience which cannot be imputed to his people, viz. His miraculous acts necessary to prove his mission and deity, wrought in obedience to his divine Father ; his ministrations of the gospel, for which through the Spirit he was qualified as man ; his execution of the whole mediatorial office ; and his

his obedience to the ceremonial law must be also excluded in respect to them, who were never under that law. Consequently, it is his perfect obedience to the whole of the moral law, as springing from a pure and holy human nature in personal union with the divine word is that which is imputed to them. Though Christ in suffering obeyed; and in obeying suffered, yet we must distinguish between his active obedience and his sufferings: by the latter we are freed from punishment, and by the former we are admitted to glory; being thereby made righteous through the righteousness of the Son of God, for it is positively said *Rom. v. 19.* that, *By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* Hence through the atonement, the holy nature, and the active obedience of the mediator, justice is fully glorified in the highest exaltation of the most vile and undeserving. Nay nothing short of this complete justification was sufficient to entitle to the least special favor from God, for they who are the subjects of regenerating grace here, enjoy it purely as the fruit of complete justification: that is, God looks upon them as complete in Christ, and being the objects of his love in Jesus, therefore in his own appointed time blesses them: for had not the people of God been virtually justified in their head, how is it possible they should become the subjects of justifying faith and possess the renovating grace of God?

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Though it was pure mercy that appointed so able and sufficient a mediator, yet only through him are the claims of justice satisfied, which were the great impediments to the operations of mercy ; but being removed from the sinner, justice rejoices in harmony with mercy, in the felicity and blessedness of the miserable ; and instead of an enemy is now become a friend. In this divine channel Justice is completely glorified, which could not have been had not mercy interfered. Wherefore ponder O my soul this divine transaction ! O consider it with growing attention and gratitude ! Look into thyself and see how miserable and vile thou art, and what thou deservest ! And then look from thyself to Jesus for mercy, through the completeness that there is in him ; because it is only in him mercy is found, and there thou mayest discover the fulness and freeness of it.

C H A P. XV.

MERCY REVEALED IN CHRIST JESUS, TO THE
HONOR OF HOLINESS.

Isai. xxxv. 8. And an high-way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness.

AS righteousness signifies what is equal, convenient, becoming, necessary and expedient ; so holiness intends purity, cleanness, chastity, and a freedom from foulness and defilement. When therefore we consider the divine holiness, we apprehend at once God's infinite regard of himself, his excellencies and the honor of them. Hence we conclude that all things at first were created suitable to the use and purpose for which they were designed ; and that the Lord demanded no more of his intelligent creatures than what they were capable of yielding. True it is, that being liable to a change, many denied the very end for which they were created ; and contrary to reason ceased to give that praise which was most justly due. Divine holiness being thus dishonored, the justice of God was concerned, that so atrocious a defection should not go unpunished, and therefore awakened the wrath and vengeance of deity against the offenders

offenders ; and moreover strictly required the gift of moral rectitude which they had squandered. — This through the fall is the awful situation of Adam and his whole posterity. How unlovely then must we be in the eye of immaculate and un-created purity ! How unlovely as guilty sinners who have contracted a debt we cannot pay ! Yea as unrighteous, and who cannot yield obedience, how deformed ! Being now become utterly impure, defiled and contaminated in our very nature ; mortally infected in the understanding, memory, imagination, conscience, will, and affections. Nay absolutely dead to God and goodness. How is it possible that holiness should ever smile again upon us ? And if it smile not how can we expect the least pledge of eternal happiness ? It is contrary to reason to expect tokens of kindness from any enemy : how then can we suppose the Lord will bestow marks of approbation on objects that he beholds with infinite abhorrence ? 'Tis a consciousness that he is our enemy, which renders us so averse to him as we are : and the more we are persuaded of what his justice demands in order that the honor of his holiness may be maintained, the more our enmity increases. — Hence appears the propriety of what hath been advanced in the preceding chapter. Conscience if properly illuminated, is never at peace until it hath some testimony that God is reconciled ;

and that divine holiness is well pleased. · But how can holiness be so, if it beholds us not in some way or other, as complete as if we had never offended? This we are not in ourselves but our head. — Suppose we were discharged from guilt, · are we not still disobedient? and, admitting we were imputatively obedient, are we not still unholy? When therefore we are beheld as holy, obedient, and guiltless, we may then and not before, be pronounced in truth, lovely in the sight of infinite purity. The spouse hath this testimony, *Cant. iv. 7. Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee.* — But this could not be in herself, in Christ her head she was so considered: for the apostle saith, *Ephes. i. 5, 6. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will: to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.* Adding in another place, viz. *Col. ii. 10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.* If God doth any thing for us of an especial nature, he doth every thing for us. — If he justify, he justifies fully, and at once; he doth not behold his people according to their apprehensions of him and his truth. No. For he looks upon none of the race of Adam whom he approves, with an imperfect approbation; on the contrary, he either fully approves, or utterly rejects. Therefore there is no medium betwixt God's love

love and his hatred with respect to the persons of men : for they who are justified, are justified from all things. *Acts* xiii. 39. How gloriously then is mercy revealed through the medium of our incarnate God and Savior ! Well may it be called the way of holiness being such in itself, even the holiness of God. Adam in an estate of innocence possessed but a creature holiness. The holiness of angels is but of the same nature, but the holiness of Christ's human nature though not an uncreated one, yet it is the holiness of God, inasmuch as that nature was in personal union with the divine word. Now if Christ be the head of his elect people, and they his body ; then must they be in the sight of infinite and uncreated holiness, amiable and lovely in him their head. Nay, more so than they were in Adam in innocence. How then is the immaculate purity of God glorified through the complete satisfaction of Jesus ! Surely it rejoices in the triumphs of mercy through this glorious mediator ! What sayest thou O reader to these things ? Didst thou ever meditate on injured holiness ? Canst thou conclude it takes delight in thee ? Is thy nature lovely in its view ? Is thine understanding, will, and affections, nay, all the powers of thy soul, pleasing to a God of unspotted holiness ? Didst thou ever reflect on thy thoughts, words, and actions, under a realizing apprehension that the infinitely holy God beholds

them? And couldst thou then suppose he viewed them with approbation? If thou say thou art a sinner, but God is a merciful God, canst thou hope in him and yet be totally indifferent how the injury done his holiness may be repaired? If thou canst thou art certainly in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. But perhaps thou art one of a different stamp. Thou indeed concludest, that without a mediator there is no hope, yet supposest he died for the original guilt and pollution of every individual of Adam's race; that if thou art sorry for thy sins and dost the best thou art able, Christ will make up the deficiency. But I would ask thee, if thy repentance need to be repented of, and all thy good deeds be evil, how then is holiness glorified by the utmost thou canst do, though in conjunction with the merits of Christ? Or how can mercy triumph, or Christ have died to any good purpose, if man through actual transgression be condemned at last? It is said, *Deut. xxxii. 4. He is the rock, his work is perfect.* And of Christ it is spoken *Heb. x. 4. That by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, or set apart.* Yea, *Isai. liii. 11. That he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* Wherefore, holiness is not glorified unless it be fully so, in a proper and perfect manner. But if thou be one who seekest salvation through Jesus, if thou art concerned for the honor of holiness; solicitous

to

to behold in Christ, holiness every way glorified ; if thou art mourning for the injuries brought upon it by thy original and personal guilt and pollution, convinced that in thee it beholds nothing lovely, that it might accept thee ; but art so conscious of the purity of a gracious God as revealed in Christ, that thou abhorrest thyself in dust and ashes ; and criest out with holy Job *Job xl. 4. Behold I am vile !* Surely mercy in thee hath been gloriously revealed, through the divine channel the Lord Jesus Christ, to the honor of immaculate and infinite purity !

C H A P. XVI.

THE WILL, OR SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD
EXALTED, THROUGH THE REVELATION OF
MERCY BY JESUS CHRIST.

Ephes. i. 10, 11. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him : in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Job xxiii. 13. But he is in one mind, and who can turn him !

THE will of God has, by many, been divided into his secret, and revealed will ; but with more propriety it may be distinguished by that of precept, and purpose. The first relates to the rule of man's conduct in reference both to law and gospel. But the latter, of which we now speak, to all the events which shall take place either in heaven, earth, or hell. Of these events, what are good spring from God the source, but what are evil he permits, and over rules for his praise. All things therefore without God are the objects of his will, either in a way of influence or permission ;

sion ; yet they differ from the objects of his knowledge and power, seeing he knows all things knowable ; and can do all things possible ; but hath not willed all things that might be willed.— Wherefore God is said to be omniscient, but he is never said to be omni-volent. And in this the divine sovereignty appears ; there being in nature, providence, and grace, a certain limit or bound touching the objects. Now as the divine will can be impelled by no external cause whatsoever, as a moving principle ; therefore faith, holiness, and good works foreseen in the creature, cannot be the cause of his will in the election of any to eternal life ; yet his own glory is the final cause of what he wills, being the highest end that can result from creature existence. That there are no more worlds created than are now in being ; that they did not sooner begin to be than they did ; or that they were created in the time they were, must be attributed to the divine sovereignty. The like may be observed with regard to Divine Providence respecting the individuals of mankind, the time and place of their existence, and the different incidents which do attend them, especially when we consider that one man is exactly similar to another by nature and in a moral view ; because we are all fallen alike in Adam. Hence the dispensations of providence are not regulated according to the different degrees of worthiness or meetness

in men ; for God sees nothing in us to incline him to bestow any favor upon one more than another. Again. The will of God is sovereign touching sacred and spiritual concerns. Hence elect angels and men. The one kept, the other redeemed, but both chosen in Christ ; whilst an innumerable company of each, being not elected, are left to sin and perish. The truth of this appears from the sacred passage prefixed to this chapter, which Dr. Guyse thus beautifully paraphrases :

“ That in the last dispensation of God’s grace under the gospel state, which may be called the dispensation of the fulness of times, because it is a completion of the various seasons of his gracious dealings with the apostate sons of men ; and was introduced as soon as the time was fully come, which he had appointed for it, and had foretold in ancient prophecies, and in which all things were ripe for it by a general expectation of the Messiah, and by a most deplorable and universal degeneracy and corruption in doctrine and manners among both Jews and Gentiles ; which made it the most seasonable time of God’s appearing for their help and recovery, and for magnifying the glory of his grace therein ; at this fittest time, I say, he in his adorable wisdom, condescension and kindness, took the opportunity to bring in this concluding administration of the richest mercy, that

“ he

" he might set to rights all the disorder and en-
 " mity that sin had introduced, and (*αναφαλαιωσθαι*)
 " by gathering together the scattered parts of in-
 " telligent creatures, might recapitulate, reduce
 " and place them in order again under Christ, as
 " their head ; including both the holy angels as
 " also the glorified saints in heaven, and believ-
 " ing Jews and Gentiles of all nations and de-
 " grees of sinners upon earth, by re-uniting them
 " into one body for mutual affection and com-
 " munion, and for joint worship under Christ,
 " who is a head of confirmation and government
 " to angels ; a head of righteousness, of represen-
 " tation and redemption as well as of the most
 " peculiar influence and government to the church
 " that is gathered from among men ; and a head
 " of reconciliation to both the Jewish and Gen-
 " tile converts between themselves, and be-
 " tween God, angels, and them ; that they might
 " all be brought into a new state of peace and
 " friendship with God and one another, and all
 " summed up and comprehended in Christ, as
 " head over all things to the church. In whom
 " also, for the accomplishment of this great de-
 " sign, we of the Jewish nation who believe have
 " been admitted in our effectual calling to a
 " part and portion in, and have a right and title
 " to, and possession in Christ our head of the glo-

" rious inheritance of eternal life ; which is dis-
 " posed of by sovereign grace to us, as it were
 " by lot, and belongs to the adoption of sons, to
 " which we were predestinated, according to the
 " free and unchangeable purpose of God ; who
 " works with almighty energy, not at random,
 " nor from a necessity of nature to the utmost of
 " what he could do, but according to the contri-
 " vance and direction of his infinite wisdom, and
 " the free determination of his own good will and
 " pleasure, as to what he sees to be most fit and
 " proper for him to do." But some will yet say, why
 are a few predestinated to eternal life, and not all ?
 Wherefore must the Lord Jesus Christ be the
 head and representative of a part, whilst the bulk
 of mankind are left to perish in the ruins of the
 fall ? Or why this man chosen in preference to
 that ? We will answer, these enquiries do not be-
 come us : all that we can say is comprehended in
 the words of Paul ; nay in the words of God him-
 self. *Rom. ix. 15.* For he saith to Moses, *I will have*
mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have com-
passion on whom I will have compassion. That the di-
 vine choice resulted not from any circumstantial
 difference foreseen in fallen man, ere they became
 practical offenders is evident ; because they were
 all exactly in the like circumstances of guilt and de-
 filement : but to remove every vain surmise touch-
 ing the cause of God's election, the apostle tells

us in the same chapter, verses 11, 12, and 13.—
That the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth. It was said unto her (viz. Rebecca) the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Hence it is plain, that neither any advantages by birth nor works foreseen could be the cause, the latter being excluded as well as the former. To this purpose the same apostle speaks, Rom. xi. 5, 6, 7.—“ Even so then (says he) at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work. What then ? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” By which the Lord makes obvious his sovereignty ; and generally for the display thereof, acts quite in opposition to our carnal reason. This he doth that he may leave no footing for man’s wisdom in this matter, confining his electing grace to no nation whatsoever, no state, condition, nor circumstance, that man can be in ; whether wise or unwise, esteemed in the world or disesteemed, rich or poor, valiant or timid, prophane or pharisaical ; yet for the most part those which men esteem the

most unlikely, such it appears by their cordial reception of the gospel, and by a work of grace on their hearts, God hath chosen. Now although from these considerations the doctrine of the divine sovereignty is established ; yet we are sure of this, that God wills nothing but what is most consistent with his own glory ; and this he will effect, being the omniscient, infinitely wise, omnipotent and independent Jehovah. *Matt. xi. 25, 26.* For as holy Job saith, *he is in one mind, and who can turn him ?* Hence appears the great importance of the duty of examination, serious reflection, a diligent use of all the means God hath afforded us ; whereby we may know ourselves, and the way to his favor and mercy. If all be not chosen in Jesus, if there be few that will be saved, how solicitous should we be to prove ourselves of that few ? But you say, the doctrine of man's death in sin, and of particular election cuts off all hope, for how can a dead man perform living actions, or what will our attempts avail if we be not elected ? I answer though it be not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy: *Rom. ix. 16.* Yet is there no encouragement given in God's word to seek him ? What ! Are not men enjoined to consider their ways, to examine their hearts and thoughts, to compare themselves with the divine law ? Are there no encouragements to look unto Jesus, to

come unto the friend of sinners ? And though no man can see his misery without the divine Spirit shine upon his word, nor come unto Jesus unless he be drawn of the Father, yet cannot men use the means to those ends ? Is it for want of natural power, or of a willingness of mind to do so ? Certainly men may do what is materially good, though they cannot without divine grace do what is formally so. If they cannot act from love, should they not act from fear ? If we be not in God's ways, there is little hope of his blessing. Men are not blessed for, but frequently in the use of the means, and although there be but a few elected, yet until you know you are excluded, your neglect of the means argues the greatest stupidity and wickedness.

C H A P. XVII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AN EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS GLORIFIED.

1 Cor. xv. 17, 18. *And if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.*

THOUGH Christ when he yielded up the ghost gave the finishing stroke to our redemption, yet by his resurrection only, was it apparent

parent he had completed it, and that it was accepted by the divine Father. If he had continued under the power of death he would have been no proper object of faith for salvation ; inasmuch, as his undertaking would thereby have appeared unaccomplished ; and consequently all who died in faith of Christ must have perished. But in that he was raised up again according to the scripture, it proved that he was indeed the Messiah, the sent of God, and a person of the dignity and excellency he declared himself to be. That the resurrection of the Son of God, might fully appear to be a proper foundation for our faith and confidence, the scripture shews that it was the work both of God essentially considered, and of each of the three divine persons in the Godhead. The former is proved by *Heb.* xiii. 20. *Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep* ; compared with *Rom.* xv. 33. and xvi. 20. That it is ascribed to the divine Father may be seen in *Ephes.* i. 17,—20. That it is attributed to the Son himself appears from *John* ii. 19,—21. And lastly, that it was the work also of the divine Spirit, or third person is obvious from *Rom.* viii. 11. Nay the apostle *Rom.* i. 4. affirms, that by his resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness. Hence it is clear that divine wisdom is fully glorified, since its end and design is

accomplished. Though it was impossible that the mediator infinite wisdom proposed should prove insufficient, yet by the resurrection of Christ the wisdom of God as such, shone forth resplendent, fully evincing that the Lord had abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. *Ephes. i. 8.* That the power of God is thereby evidently glorified is as clear ; for as the Lord Jesus Christ not only bare our sins, but bore them away, he thereby declared the power of God to save ; of which his resurrection from the dead was a manifest proof. That justice was fully pacified could be known no otherwise than by the resurrection of the mediator ; who by his glorious triumph over the grave, glorified truth in all the threatenings and demands which it had uttered. In this glorious event the apostle triumphs. *Rom. viii. 33, 34.* *Who shall lay any thing (says he) to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again.* And more than all this divine holiness appears to be glorified, seeing the Lord sheds abroad his love in the hearts of his people, as the fruit and effect of their faith in a crucified redeemer. *Rom. v. 1,—5.* We might observe also, that the perfections of God were all glorified as they stood engaged touching the dispensation of grace. From the fall to the death of Christ all the promises fulfilled ; the utility of the types evinced ; and the prophecies

cies in regard to the person of the mediator, his work and office accomplished ; yea, by this glorious resurrection all the promises of grace and mercy appertaining to the gospel dispensation, were ratified and confirmed. As the burial of Christ proved the reality of his death, and that by it, he had made full satisfaction and was indeed made a curse for his people ; so also his burial evinced, that the curse was removed. *Deut. xxi. 23.* All pains and penalties due to the sins of his people being buried together with him. But in that he rose again he gave full proof of his deity, mission, the conquest of all our spiritual foes, and the harmony of the divine perfections, through the redemption he had wrought out ; nay, by triumphing over the grave itself, evidently declared that both death and the grave were sanctified to his people ; and that at last they should be delivered entirely from the power of both : for his resurrection was an open and perfect acquittance, given by God himself to him, as the head and representative of all his elect people ; and was the most convincing evidence that he had indeed spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them by his death. *Col. i. 15.* Now was fulfilled that prophecy of the psalmist *Psalm lxxxix. 12.* *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations ; for I have said mercy shall be built up for ever ;* *thy*

thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.— Because mercy having exalted the intervening perfections of deity through the complete satisfaction of Jesus, and received a divine acknowledgement thereof in his resurrection, it gloriously triumphs, accounting all other enemies as chaff and vanity : since Christ hath died, yea and is risen again mercy looks down with infinite contempt on all the hindrances and impediments which still remain ; they are counted as nothing, yea as the small dust of the balance ; for though sin be mighty, and satan mighty, yea the world mighty, yet where mercy deigns to smile, these enemies are esteemed as already conquered, possessing only an illegal and usurped authority. Wherefore the language of the Lord by the prophet is, *Isai. xli. 15, 16. Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth : thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away ; and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.* If these things be so, what sayest thou O man ! Hast thou ever been made to see indeed thy want of mercy ? Has justice shewn thee thy mighty debt ? Dost thou see that for every sin thou hast committed, thy desert is everlasting punishment ? Art thou convinced thou art a sinner in Adam ? That thou wert conceived in sin, that by nature thy very will is dead

to God ? And though not perfectly persuaded of these things (for no man is so convinced of, or sees his sin as the law and justice of God beholds it) yet dost thou see that thou hast run in debt to justice ten thousand talents, and hast nothing to pay ? And so far from being able to recompence God by thy repentance, art thou convinced that thy best repentance needs to be repented of ? If so, be then solicitous to enquire for mercy, seek it in Jesus, through the atonement of Jesus, the obedience of Jesus, yea, through the complete righteousness of the Son of God. Seek it by virtue of the free promise and call of the gospel in him. Say not my conviction and repentance warrants me to believe, and entitles me to mercy. Consider ; this would be a great injury to mercy : because God's mercy is free mercy and full mercy ; yea it would be dishonoring to Christ, just as if he had not done enough to open to thee the door of mercy, but thou must make an addition thereto by that which is in itself sufficient to condemn thee. Mercy knows not the worthy and self-sufficient : it delights only in the miserable and wretched, and to them only is it revealed. — Therefore the more thou art convinced of thy desert of endless punishment and of thy utter impotency, the more likely thou art not to endeavor to purchase, but truly to discover and obtain mercy indeed by a mediator.

C H A P. XVIII.

THE ASCENSION AND SESSION OF CHRIST,
A FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE
ATTRIBUTES GLORIFIED.

Heb. x. 12. But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins ever sat down at the right hand of God.

Heb. ix. 24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

CHRIST having gloriously effected the great work of our redemption which he had undertaken, and evidenced by his resurrection from the dead, that he had so done, it was but proper he should ascend into heaven, and be there received ; for if he had been excluded the divine presence there had been the utmost reason to think, that neither justice nor holiness were well pleased ; no nor any of the perfections glorified. His admission therefore to the right hand of his divine Father was an undeniable proof to the contrary. This our Saviour introduces as the argument by which the divine Spirit would vanquish the guilty fears of men, viz. *He shall convince the*

world of righteousness because I go to my Father. John xvi. 10. Plainly declaring that every impediment to a union and communion with the majesty of heaven was now removed out of the way of those, who were brought truly to trust in the mediation of Christ. For in the names of all such he ascended, and as their forerunner took possession of the heavenly inheritance. As therefore his ascension was necessary, so was his session at God's right hand ; being expressive of his dominion and government as mediator, and that he might make intercession for us ; begin and carry on a work of grace on our hearts, rule for, in, and over us, until he should fully accomplish the end and design of his obedience and death. That he was an intercessor previous to these wonderful events cannot be well doubted ; otherwise none could have entered heaven prior to our Lord's glorious exaltation : but then he was so on the footing of his covenant engagement only, entered into before all worlds, and by virtue whereof old testament saints were taken to glory. Now when that engagement was performed, it was then meet he should carry on that great work in his complete person. Hence we see that divine channel or medium, whereby mercy is exalted or glorified ; and through which it displays itself in its operations, to the glory and exaltation of every moral and revealed attribute of Jehovah. It was not intended to enter largely into

into every particular here treated, either in respect to our Lord's humiliation, or exaltation : as how the various types of the old testament answered to their glorious anti-type, or how the dignity and excellence of Christ are manifested by his glorious ascension, and wonderful session at the right hand of his divine Father. These are left to the investigation and meditation of the pious reader. If these things be so, let not the tempted believer be discouraged ; Christ hath not only finished the grand work of his redemption, but the divine Father has given the most irrefragable and demonstrative proofs of it. Canst thou then imagine O soul ! that Christ will be backward to grant thee the blessings of redemption ? Thou art kept back perhaps from asking, as thou shouldest, by the feelings of thy heart corruptions, and a deep conviction of the number and guilt of thy manifold transgressions. But is it not Christ's office to pardon guilt, and renew the mind ? If thou couldest have obtained these things in any other way, he had never been revealed. Wherefore lay before him the whole state of thy soul ; tell him of all thy wretchedness and misery ; thy wants and necessities ; and what enemies they are which oppose thee ; and be assured, that instead of rejecting thee with contempt, he will make it manifest sooner or later, that he hath both an ear to hear, and an arm to deliver.

C H A P. XIX.

MERCY GLORIFIED, AND SAVINGLY
REVEALED THROUGH THE GOSPEL CALL.

Titus ii. 11. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men.

WHEN we meditate and reflect on the mercy of God, as efficaciously revealed in the hearts of men, we are constrained to say that it well deserves the epithets free, full, and everlasting.—Free, because not revealed to all, and those to whom it is made known, utterly as undeserving as others. Full and everlasting, because it appertains to him who is eternal and unchangeable. As the divine sovereignty is manifested in the bestowment of this grace, being conferred only upon a few ; so also the Lord will shew himself a sovereign God even in the external administration of the gospel, which is the only instrument whereby the spirit of God regenerates his people. All nations at all times are not so much as acquainted with the letter thereof, consequently millions die totally ignorant of the mediator. Whilst this is the awful case of many, others there are who have it in their hands and are at liberty to read and search it, but are destitute of a public ministry ; and

and though providence may so appoint, that other classes of mankind shall have public preaching among them, the truth shall be so obscured with error and superstition that it shall prove rather a disadvantage than a benefit unto them ; wherefore it will appear that very few enjoy the privilege of a clear and faithful explication of the gospel.— This distinction in point of privilege consists not in any divine mandate or prohibition, but in the various dispensations of Providence ; because it is not only a lawful but a commendable employ to propagate the knowledge thereof amongst all nations and ranks of men without distinction ; and yet where it is propagated, men are not converted unless the spirit of the Lord will render it effectual. Though from hence it appears that the Lord's elect people ere called by grace, are exclusive of others the objects of mercy's peculiar regard, who being the only persons for whom Christ paid down the price of redemption, and to whom alone the gospel shall be made effectual to salvation in God's appointed time ; yet all who are brought to the external knowledge of the truth, or fit under the sound of the gospel, are equally called upon by mercy to embrace it, as it is revealed through the mediation of Christ ; the ~~c~~ being in this respect no difference between elect and non-elect : for mercy beholds both condemned and dead in a spiritual sense, utterly void of all merit

merit and ability, and therefore fit objects for mercy to call upon. All are spiritually dead, and all are under the sentence of everlasting punishment, though some may have run more deep in debt to divine justice than others by means of practical offences. Mercy, to point out its own nature, and to shew that in the outward call it looks for no excellency in one above another, does for the most part when it speaks to the heart, speak to the deepest funk in practical iniquities. However in order to evince that by the gospel call mercy is glorified, it will be necessary to investigate the proper meaning of the word mercy. Among the Latins it was expressed by the Latin word *misericordia*, which imports a cordial grief or concern arising from the wretchedness of another ; it is expressed also by *commiseratio*, answering to the Greek word *αὐτοινθησις*, which signifies sympathy, or pity, or being grieved at heart by another's grief or misery : the Hebrew word correspondent thereto is *רָחֵל* ; if considered as a verb, it intends to love entirely, intimately, tenderly, affectionately, and from the very bowels. In Pihel, it signifies to pity ; as a noun, it is expressed by bowels and mercies : for mercy ariseth from the moving of the bowels at the sight of misery ; answerable to the Greek words *σωτηρία διάνοια*. *Luke* i. 78. Again. The Greek word *ελεος*, in respect to God, denotes pity of every kind, and also endless benignity.—

It is used by the seventy in translating the Hebrew word **חִנּוּכָה**; interpreted by *Leigh* in his *Critica Sacra*, a sacred affection of mercy, pity, grace, benignity, and bountiful good will towards any without respect of merit. It is, says he, that benignity or beneficence, which one is obliged unto by no legal necessity: this is plainly unmerited, and not due, and altogether free favor. The seventy have likewise used it to express the Hebrew word **חִנּוּכָה**. *Psalms* vi. 2. The root of which the same author translates *miseritus, gratificatus, gratia prosecutus fuit, &c.* and says it imports to do a thing gratis. *Chrysostom* treating on the mercy of God, thus expresses himself, “ Though there be in God *miserationes multæ*, yet there is but one mercy; which is his essence, from whence issue *motus misericordiæ*.” See *Leigh’s Critica*. If then mercy properly signifies what is now observed, and if mercy be one of the divine attributes, infinite in God; yea his very essence, how should it be glorified but as such? To limit it is certainly not to glorify it; and this we certainly do when we suppose that any of Adam’s race are too sinful and vile, or not sufficiently qualified for it. Some in order to obviate this charge have thought on a new device. They say men through mercy must be qualified for mercy: they must be rendered, if not worthy, yet meet and fit for the divine favor; and this is done by divine grace through saving conviction and re-

penitance, the effects of the law only in the hand of the spirit. But ask the assertors of this doctrine, can men be saved without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ? They answer no : they are so far from that, (say they) that they are notwithstanding their legal conviction and repentance, still in a condemned estate, and under the wrath of God, and dying in that state shall certainly perish everlasting. What a flat contradiction is here !— Men are the subjects of the peculiar mercy of God before they are the subjects of his peculiar mercy. Men are saved by the law ; and yet no man by the law can be saved. They alledge, such are in a state of salvation before faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet they will own (*Acts* iv. 12.) There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved : and how can that be but through faith in him ? How to reconcile these things I am utterly at a loss. What is the mercy of God but favor to the miserable ? And what is the highest instance of his favor, but to translate us from an estate of utmost misery, into an estate of absolute security ? Is it not a contradiction to affirm that we may be in such a state and yet the Lord unreconciled ? Certainly such doctrine is a flat denial of Christ the divine medium of saving grace, and makes him truckle to the law, by granting to sinners salvation, which they through the law have already obtained. Nay such a position
 maintains

maintains that we enjoy the noblest instance of mercy (for thus I call regeneration, or being born again; from God, under the character of a God of infinite wrath and vengeance. Here a remark or two is necessary. Though Christ be God's unspeakable gift, yet if a man be not saved through it, how will it be of eternal profit to him? Therefore whatsoever be the medium, beside Christ, of regeneration, be it the law, or what you please, that medium will be the Savior; and regeneration as it is salvation begun, the chief blessing a man can here possess, considered as a work wrought within him. But certainly as God first loved his people, then chose them in Christ; so without doubt, they are first actually instated into his favor by justifying grace; by the spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, ere they can repent with that repentance which is unto life; and consequently before they are so convinced of sin as truly to hate it for God's sake; that is, from a love of his purity, authority, and glory: for wherin does the essence of misery consist? Does it not consist in his displeasure, and to be under the frowns of his justice? What felicity can the whole creation afford, if God be an enemy? Yea, what spiritual life can there be in any heart, if God be our adversary, if we be really in bondage to his justice? And is not this our awful case before faith? I speak not now in reference to God's

everlasting purpose of mercy towards his elect ; neither in respect to their virtual justification in Christ before ; nor touching the evidence of faith ; their feelings and frames after grace received ; but in relation to the Lord, as the supreme sovereign and governor of the intelligent creation, the holy and just judge, who will render to every man according to his deeds ; and to our actual state and circumstances in his sight, considered in these characters. I would therefore again say, is it not declared that in his favor is life ? How then can we enjoy spiritual life without it ? If not, what then becomes of saving conviction and repentance through the law, ere God be reconciled ? As then the mercy of God is glorified by the effectual calling of sinners from a state both of condemnation, and spiritual death ; consequently the outward or gospel call, the instrument of this blessing, must in its nature, whether made effectual or not, exalt this attribute. This appears

First, In its universality.

Secondly, In its freedom.

If it were not universal the persons entitled to so great a privilege need to be pointed out by certain characteristics peculiar to them ; distinguishing them as more deserving thereof than others.—

But

But if this were the case how would mercy appear to be mercy ? It would rather wear the character of justice. Among men the more miserable the object, the more our compassion is excited.— And who do you think are completely miserable in God's sight if they be not those who are destitute both of his favor and image ? If distinction of desert be disallowed, shall we say they are pointed out by being greater practical offenders than others ? To affirm this would sound very harsh, as it would be an encouragement to sin, that grace might abound. Therefore we conclude that to whomsoever the revelation of redemption is in an external manner made known, to such it has a voice. Nay mercy requires every such person to believe in the Son of God, whether their offences have been more or less in number, greater or less aggravated ; seeing the best are under the sentence of everlasting punishment, and totally dead in sin. But as it is the nature of sin to harden and stupify the mind, and mankind universally before the law of God is revealed in their consciences by his spirit, think themselves quite well, see no need of mercy through Christ as the scripture shews it, or are extremely liable to mistake the voice and nature of the evangelical call to them. Legal conviction is therefore previously necessary not to render deserving of or qualify for mercy ; but to shew the sinner his awful state,

and

and how much he stands in need thereof. Now it appears that legal conviction does not entitle to the call of mercy, but her call may be, and is to many, who neither know their misery nor see their danger. If not many such who attend the gospel could not be chargeable with the sin of rejecting Christ, neither savingly to believe would be their duty. The spirit of the Lord through the law begets legal conviction in the conscience ; hence our legal faith. False views of mercy mixed herewith beget a legal repentance ; and a legal repentance produces a legal obedience. This more or less precedes true faith in Christ ; yet before an evangelical faith takes place in the heart no proof is procured that the state of a person so circumstanced is better ; for still mercy beholds such a one upon the like footing with others. Nay perhaps by finning against greater light, persons of this stamp may have incurred more guilt than many at ease : for such are greater enemies to the truth than the openly profane. 'Tis true they are in quest of salvation, yet if mercy do not speak to the heart as well as to the ear ; they only fall at last into Tophet with greater solemnity. Suppose a man utterly void of saving faith were convinced of the glory of the divine sovereignty and dominion, the omnipresence, holiness, justice, truth, and power of God ; the extensiveness, spirituality, and strictness of his law ; the binding

nature, efficacy, and dreadfulness of its curses ; the multitude and heinousness of his sins, both of omission and commission ; do we think that these convictions will produce that love which the law requires ? If not the heart hath no good in it, because it is void of love. " Would any man, faith *Charnock* vol. i. " page 5, seek God merely because he is, or love " him because he is, if he did not know that he " should be acceptable unto him ?" Certainly apostate angels are convinced of the truth of God's excellencies, but doth this produce a love of him ? Truth and good must unite to beget love in our hearts ; otherwise the whole gospel system must fall to the ground. When the divine perfections appear not only true and excellent, but also friendly ; then we begin to love and not before, and consequently there is no good in any heart before some degree of true faith in the satisfaction of Christ, wherein alone they can appear friendly, hath taken place. This truth is evident from the following passages of holy scripture. viz. 2 Cor. iv. 3. *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* And again chap. iii. 18. *But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord.* Also chap. iv. 6. *For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* These things

things being premised, we again assert the gospel call to be universal ; for it hath no limitation in the scriptures. Even among the Jews no stranger was prohibited from an union with them, and an enjoyment of such privileges as were necessary to salvation. But under the present dispensation the Lord commands all men every where to repent, *Acts xvii. 30.* (or change their minds ; be wise again, as the original word signifies,) and what is this but to embrace the Son of God by faith ? *John xx. 31.* *These things* (faith the beloved apostle) *are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.* And Paul says, *1 Tim. i. 15.* *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.* Legal conviction is neither a title to, nor meetness for mercy ; but only necessary to shew the sinner his need of it.—Now though hardened sinners be deaf to the call of mercy, yet it ceases not to call such, who either hear or read the gospel ; and therein the infinite mercy of God is glorified : yet it hath no call but through the redemption of Jesus Christ. Again, That the gospel call is unlimited is obvious from the gospel feast recorded : *Luke xiv. 21. 23.* for not all that were invited complied with the invitation ; for were not the scribes and pharisees, Jews, and Gentile proselytes invited ? Certainly they were.

were. But did they all come that were bidden ? Surely not. Where would be the sin of unbelief, or flighted mercy, if mercy had no call but to them who obeyed her ? For to say a man is forbidden to embrace the salvation set forth in the gospel for want of legal conviction is really dangerous, and widely differs from asserting that such who are wholly destitute of such conviction will not embrace it. Wherefore the universality of the gospel call must be maintained in order to maintain

Secondly, Its freedom. The very epithet given the call of the gospel, *Titus* ii. 11. is expressive of its freedom. Doth not the Greek word there used exclude all merit and signify a free gift ? Is not this word viz. *χάρις* applied both to the grace of the gospel and the gospel of God's grace ? *Acts* xiv. 13. Is it not a call to those who have no money, no worthiness, no meetness ? But if it be not universal it cannot be free ; for why should any be excluded if not for want of money ? How doth such an exclusion comport with *Isai.* iv. 1, 2. compared with *Rev.* xxii. 17 ? Surely the freedom and universality of this divine call must stand or fall together ; and if divested of these characters the persons whom it calls must be possessed of some kind of desert or qualification, but how that can be to the honor of mercy is hard to say. If God's electing grace be not revealed,

neither to, nor in its objects before the gospel message be embraced, if God's people in their natural estate be not of one particular character, but as variously circumstanced and as differently inclined as the non-elect, if the law of God disapprove of them previous to their effectual calling as much as it doth of others, if conscience properly enlightened by the law no more shun to reprove them than it doth the reprobate, and if no man dare to say he is reprobated who hath not committed the unpardonable sin, by what means may a man know the gospel is, or is not, to him, if it be not free and universal ? If you allow it calls upon any, these particulars granted, will establish as a truth, the freedom and universality of its call ; and that in the strictest harmony with the grace of effectual calling, whereby mercy will be exalted both in the message and grace of the gospel. This call then is general ; for they on whom it calls are rational beings ; for were it conditional or particular, it would be to the last degree absurd to imagine that any would receive it, until the conditions were pointed out, and they were sure they were the subjects of them. But if it be unconditional and free, if to the vilest of the vile, nay to all who hear it with the outward ear, mercy then is thereby honored indeed, and the man who obeys the call acts in so doing a part most rational and justifiable ; of which act being

utterly

utterly incapable but by the special grace of God, the divine sovereignty is also maintained and displayed in the triumph and conquest of mercy, which now not only calls but calls effectually.—What makes the work of believing so difficult to the awakened mind, is a persuasion that Christ did not pay down the price of redemption for all, but for a few; and yet we are called to look to him as our sin offering, without any evidence that we are of the number of that few.—Here our reason is at once in the greatest perplexity; and is apt to say, it is foolishness, for I may believe that which never was. But is it contrary to reason in obedience to God's call, to believe in his Son? If not whence the objection? The case then must be, God will now be honored in our salvation by faith in his mercy and truth, just in the same way as in our first head, we dis-honored him in his truth and holiness; for where would be the excellency of our faith, if God were first to tell us we were elected? Certainly then, they who thus honor him cannot be deceived because their faith is not only an obedience to, but is also of the operation of God wrought in the hearts only of his elect people: this appears from *Ephes. ii. 8, 9. For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast.* It is added, verse the 10th, *For we are his workmanship, created*

in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. The difficulty then of believing is not in coming up, but rather in coming down to God's method of grace, which is to receive salvation freely, and as ungodly in ourselves. This the pride of our nature cannot bear, nor our reason admit; hence that aptitude even in many, who profess the doctrine of particular redemption, to lay some evidence of grace before faith, for a foundation to it. What is this but a seeking to know our election in order to believe? And where is the difficulty of believing if that be known? But admitting this to be just, what would be the consequence? Supposing this evidence to be saving conviction, as 'tis called.—Would not this lead us to prove it by repentance, and then to prove the truth of our repentance by our good works and to lay claim to Christ in consequence thereof? By this practice are we not in danger of mistaking the very nature of faith? For certainly this would be laying the law and works for a foundation of Christ and grace. Conviction then purely legal can be no evidence of salvation, yet there may be much legal conviction in that heart which is purified by faith. Now the former is not that evidence but the latter, which will ever discover itself by an aiming to trust in Christ alone, in obedience to the call of mercy through the call of the gospel. Some may say, is not legal conviction

vision then of use? I reply, that it is so, has been already observed; however in what point of view it is to be regarded see *Erskine's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 540, where he introduces one objecting, "I want a law work, I am not weary and heavy laden, and therefore am not fit to take hold of God's covenant." Answer. If you think to make a law work and humiliation a price in your hand, to recommend you to Christ and fit you for him; I tell you, that instead of fitting yourself for Christ, you are building up a wall between Christ and you, that you shall never get over. If you see an absolute need of Christ and that you are undone without him, do not stand to seek more law work; for that moment you close with Christ by virtue of the covenant of grace, the law has gotten its end, Christ being the end of the law to every one that believeth. It is the weary and heavy laden are called, but that is not to exclude others, who cannot find that disposition in themselves; and they are mentioned in particular in the call, because they are most ready to exclude themselves from having any concern in Christ or his covenant." Hence it is plain that the gospel call being universal and free, divine mercy is thereby exalted; as no worth, nor meetness, in the creature is first expected; but infinite mercy pursuing infinite misery with its solicitations, shews itself in its

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true and genuine character, and obviates every objection that any self-convicted or self-condemned sinner can make : nay it answers all the objections which may be made from a supposition of a want of conviction, and proves to him that his estate would not be in the least degree better, were he as perfectly convinced as those in Tophet ; and with relation to those who neither hear, understand, nor obey its call, inasmuch as they are called, it cannot be said that its overtures are inconsistent with its character because none are excepted : the nature then of its call is to be considered. It is to itself in harmony with all the revealed perfections of deity. Wherefore it is a call to Christ the way, to faith in him ; for mercy hath no call but through that divine channel wherein the truth, justice, and holiness of God are glorified ; for as by Christ these divine attributes are fully and perfectly glorified ; so the universality and freedom of the gospel call declares it so to be, and magnifies the mercy of God in harmony therewith ; yea Christ thereby is exalted, and the wisdom and power of Jehovah displayed, who could reconcile parties so opposite, as these divine attributes and sinful man. Therefore above all things mistake not the voice of mercy, for even the most hardened sinner is not without some thoughts of mercy, but what are they ? Certainly vain notions thereof. Some of this character

rather think God will shew mercy without a mediator. Others that their good intentions shall give them a title to heaven, and that mercy through Christ will pardon a life of wilful iniquities. A third sort think that meer external worship in conjunction with the merits of Christ will save them. A fourth that mercy's call is a call to legal repentance only ; by which they think to enter heaven, supposing Christ's sacrifice will perfect what is lacking. A fifth that legal repentance is conversion ; by which they are entitled to Christ, and all the blessings of the new covenant. Now can we think that these do rightly understand the voice of mercy ? For certainly when it calls, not only the sinner's misery, but its own glory in harmony with the glory of all the divine, but injured, perfections of deity is primarily and principally regarded ; nay it would have the sovereignty of God exalted, therefore though its call be universal, it is not to the mediator, as having really obeyed and died for every individual of Adam's posterity, but to him as an official Savior for every guilty sinner to approach unto and believe in. Its call then is not a revelation of God's will of purpose but precept ; and a declaration of every man's duty, that hears the gospel, or to whom Providence sends it. Let none therefore be discouraged, though they have but the bible in their hands ; much less those who attend the preaching of the gospel in its truth

truth and purity. To the former I would say, art thou concerned for the salvation of thy soul? And has Providence excluded thee from hearing the word preached in its purity? Be then concerned to read the oracles of truth with attention and prayer. Labor to be convinced what a sinner thou art both by nature and practice, and what sin deserves. Be solicitous to be persuaded that thou neither hast, nor canst have any ground of hope from any righteousness of thine own; then think whether the Lord has not provided a way wherein he may be gracious. Read his word for the discovery thereof with fervent prayer to him to teach thee; and if thou shouldest be so favored as to perceive the way God has revealed in his word, even the atonement and righteousness of his son, labor to see that thou art called upon to embrace it. Perhaps brought thus far thou mayest be under the most sensible feelings of thine own inability. If thou hast right views of Christ the enemies of thy soul will certainly oppose thee. Thy complaint will be that thou art not able to come unto him, thou canst not believe. Now know for thine encouragement, that there is no objection that thou canst make against thyself but mercy hath an answer for. If thou say thou art not sufficiently convinced? It will reply dost thou see thy need of Jesus? If the objection be, thou art too vile, it will answer, that mercy is for the vilest.

vilest. If thou complain thou canst not come, nay thou canst not desire to come, her advice will be, to groan unto that God who heard the groanings of his people of old, and came down to deliver them. *Exod. ii. 24.* But to the latter; take heed that thou rest not in the word heard. Ponder thine own sinfulness and misery; view thyself in the glass of God's law and justice; and consider that if one sin deserve everlasting punishment, what thy desert must be. Labor to be convinced that thou art spiritually dead by nature; and if thou never didst believe notwithstanding such rich privileges, Oh rest not till thou canst say with appropriation, verily in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, and to that end consider both the medium and instrument of mercy, even the gospel that calls upon thee.

C H A P. XX.

MERCY DISPLAYED IN THE DIVINE
EFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom: but in demonstration of the spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

WHEN we compare this passage of holy writ, with *Rom. iv. 5.* and *Tit. iii. 5.* we immediately own the Lord the Holy Ghost to be the divine efficient of his people's faith; and that the very nature thereof being holy, sanctification must be necessarily the immediate fruit and effect of their justification. The objects of this grace you will see described in our ninth chapter on reference thereto; wherein we have endeavored to prove that all men by nature are alike miserable, equally under the curse and condemnation of God's most righteous law, dead in sin, and utterly destitute of the least spiritual motion. That they are justified as such, Paul positively declares, *Rom. iv. 5.* *To him (says he) that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* That is, immediately previous to justifying grace they were

were in that state, but when justified, sanctification manifested by true repentance, instantaneously followed. Therefore when God's elect people are apprehended of God, they apprehend him, and apprehending him by faith, love him. Though mercy be so displayed in the call of the gospel as to leave sinners inexcusable, yet when displayed both in word and power, it appears both infinite and sovereign mercy. The one is a call to the miserable, the other is a rendering that call effectual. The former is in word only, but the latter in power. *1 Thes. i. 5.* Hence our Lord saith, *John vi. 45. Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.* And again verse 37. *All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* — Mercy by the gospel call hath left no room for sinners reasonably to object; but though they may object, yet when mercy speaks to the heart, all their unreasonable objections are silenced. Therefore the Lord in his work upon their hearts, deals with them as rational creatures. They are not saved without their reason and in opposition to their wills, but their understandings before dark and blind, being now enlightened, nothing appears to them more rational than the gospel message; and their wills before stubborn and perverse, being sweetly brought into subjection thereto, they embrace the same with delight as most salutary for them, as

well as honorable to God ; so that it comes to pass that they are not converted against their wills, but that their very understandings and wills are converted. If then the spirit of God only teaches so as to beget true faith, the knowledge so learnt must be of a different nature than what can be procured by human teaching, though the things taught be the same. Hence it follows that divine mercy attains the end both of Christ's satisfaction and the revelation of God's love to sinners through the gospel ; for were not the gospel to be attended at all with the power of the spirit, not one of the fallen race of Adam would embrace it, and consequently none would be saved. The rational mind may perceive the literal meaning of the gospel truths, but it is only supernatural illumination can produce a cordial confidence, bringing forth such fruits as true faith is described to yield. Men are apt to look on the gospel as a simple narrative or relation ; in this view it may produce an assent, but nothing more : yet when it is viewed not only as a narrative, but in the nature also of an unconditional, free, and unmerited promise, held forth for every ungodly sinner, yea for him who worketh not, to embrace ; the man who is beaten out of all legal hopes and thus views it, is I am apt to think certainly taught by the spirit ; and doth indeed with the heart believe. Christ in the gospel is not only represented as the Son of God

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dying for his elect people; but also as the divine medium of salvation for all to behold; so that no one shall be able to say either here, or in another world—I would have looked to Christ but I had no authority to do so; for in the former view the whole of gospel truths can be considered only as an history or narration, without any promissory encouragement to those who cannot prove their election to believe for salvation. Were we to ponder the different designs of law and gospel it might obviate many important mistakes, to which we are incident. The law in the hand of the spirit is not his ministration to salvation, but condemnation; therefore not that of mercy, but of justice, because it puts only this difference between one sinner and another, viz. the one is convicted, the other unconvicted, yet the state of both still alike. It is only through the gospel that the spirit is a spirit of life; for as the gospel is the ministration of the spirit in respect both to justifying and sanctifying grace; so is it also to adults the alone medium of the spirit, and the only means whereby mercy is effectually glorified by him who calleth. *Rom. ix. 11.* For faith the apostle, *Rom. viii. 2, 3.* *The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death; for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh,*

flesh. And *Rom. x. 7.* so then *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* To which he adds this important question. *Gal. iii. 2.* This only would I learn of you. *received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* If then the spirit only through his powerful teaching and application of gospel truths, wherein alone, and not in the law the harmony of the divine perfections is displayed, beget faith in the hearts of perishing sinners: surely then mercy in strict consistence with the honor of every other divine perfection is most gloriously exalted by this divine operation; because now the end is effected, to which, what went before were the glorious means. Let us then be assiduously attentive to God's truths. To be careless how we expect to be saved, or whether God be honored or dishonored in our salvation is highly criminal. If in the methods of his grace he hath primarily consulted his glory, how can we be indifferent about the nature of our confidence? To say if a man love God and his neighbour that is sufficient, all other things are meer speculations, how dangerous! For mayest thou not be mistaken in thy love? If thou hast not love to Christ in sincerity thou art accursed; and if true love be only the offspring of faith, *Gal. v. 6.* how is faith the meer speculation, or how is it wise to be careless what the nature thereof may be? The apostle James lays, chap. ii. 18. *Show me thy faith without thy*

thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.— Does he therefore discard faith ? Or rather does he not put a difference between a true and false confidence ? If Abraham's faith was an operative faith as the same apostle testifies, *James* ii. 23. and if Abraham were justified in the manner Paul describes, *Rom.* iv. 1,—5. take heed lest all thy love, fears, repentance, humility, nay all thy joys and comforts, may not prove a meer delusion ; for as is the fountain so are the streams. A true faith is productive of the genuine fruits of holiness, consequently a false faith only of their semblance.

C H A P. XXI.

MERCY IN THE HANDS OF CHRIST, AS PROPHET AND KING OF HIS ELECT.

John xvii. 2. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

THOUGH the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity be the divine efficient both to convince and to convert the children of men, yet he works not in the heart of any but through the medium of Christ's prophetical and kingly offices. *Matt.* xxviii. 18. *All power (saith our Lord) is given unto*

unto me in heaven and in earth: intimating, that he was qualified to bring about the divine purposes of mercy relative to his elect people; for whom he had made complete satisfaction to justice in order to that end: for he had in view the fulfilment of his great design, in giving eternal life to as many as the father had given him; to commence according to divine appointment, be preserved and maintained here, and at last perfected in a state of glory. If the divine spirit work in the consciences of the wicked as a spirit of bondage, it is the effect of the administration of Christ's prophetical and kingly offices; *Rev. i. 16. xix. 15, 21.* for the kingdom of the Messiah is not only within his church, but both external and internal amongst men in general also. Hence his authority and government extend to all kingdoms and states, communities and societies, whether civil or sacred, either in a way of influence or permission; as also in, and over the conscience of every individual, all which is necessary for the preservation and final felicity of his people already called, as well as the gathering his elect uncalled out of the world that lies in wickedness. That Christ hath this plenitude of power or authority will appear if we consult the following passages, viz. *Col. i. 16, 18.* *That by him (viz. Christ) were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities,*

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or powers: all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist, and he is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. The divine perfections being glorified by Christ's righteousness and death, and he obtaining by his intercession, founded on his satisfaction, the mercy promised, does as our spiritual Joseph bestow the spirit of grace upon his people in his own appointed time and way: for it is by the energy of this divine spirit with which as mediator he is anointed, that dead sinners by him are quickened. That Christ in his human nature, considered in conjunction with the divine, should receive the spirit without measure, for the above and for all the purposes of his mediation, seems most meet and fit; not only that the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity, but that Christ according to the constitution of his complex person might be glorified. As God, it was becoming he should deliver his counsels with authority and efficacy, being a teacher sent from heaven, and the original of all wisdom; besides who should reveal the secrets of the Father but the Son? And that they should be conveyed through the manhood, condescension to our frailty, and encouragement to our hope, required it; for whilst the Majesty of heaven was veiled in our nature, we could receive his instructions without

that amazement and terror, which would otherwise have attended them. *Deut.* xviii. 15,—20. Saving grace now dwelling in the human nature of Christ in union with the divine Word, and being in it as a fountain redundant ; this is a full proof that mercy has now free course to the sinful race of man, to the honor of all the divine attributes ; for it is communicated through that channel or medium in which they were glorified ; the same order taking place in the application of salvation as in the operation of it. The Father was not incarnate, because he was the guardian of the rights and laws of heaven, he being the first person ; to him it was more suitable to exact satisfaction and receive intercession, nor would the incarnation of the Holy Spirit have consisted with that order which we have revealed in holy writ, for he is set forth therein as the power of God, *Luke* i. 35. by whom the Father and the Son execute all things : nay as the spirit of the Father and the Son, by whose operation the human nature of Christ was raised up from the dead.—Therefore in effectual calling it is from the mercy of the Father, through the mediation of the Son, by the power of the Spirit, that souls are quickened : and this mediation of Christ respects not only his satisfaction to law and justice, but the execution of his prophetic and kingly offices in the illumination and sanctification of the mind savingly

to believe on him, by which we are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. “ Who could more fitly restore us to favor and the right of children than the only begotten and only beloved Son, who is the singular and everlasting object of his Father’s delight ? Our relation to God is an imitation and expression of Christ’s. He is a Son by nature, a servant by condescension ; we are servants by nature, and sons by grace and favor. “ *Eph.* i. 5. Our adoption into the line of heaven is by purchase. The eternal Son took flesh and was made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. *Rom.* viii. “ 19. Who was more fit to repair the image of God in man, and beautify his nature that was defiled with sin, than the Son, who is the express image of his Father’s person, *Heb.* i. 3. and brightness and beauty itself ? Who can better communicate the divine counsels to us than the eternal Word ? ” — *Bates’s Harmony*, p. 93. From all which it is obvious, that not only all the divine excellencies are honored through the redemption of Christ, but mercy derives an additional lustre in that we are to seek the blessings of mercy by him, who experimentally is acquainted with the desert of our iniquities ; for says the apostle to the *Hebrews*, chap. iv. 15, 16. *We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feelings*

ings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. As the power of God ceases not to be infinite when limited in its operations ; so his mercy cannot be denied this character, because it is exemplified but on a few : for the subjects thereof being in number limited, does not alter its nature. It is infinite mercy, because the objects thereof were in a state of infinite wretchedness, and the impediments to their salvation infinite in their nature, which that Savior who is infinite hath removed ; and also in that it raises its subjects to infinite happiness and purity in point of duration. Nay it deserves this character as it is dispensed in its blessings by him who is infinite, yet possessed of a nature like unto our own infinitely dignified by being wonderfully united to the nature of God. Are any of us then in a state of security, blind and stupid, insensible of our sins, and the evil of them ? Are we unconvinced of our original guilt and pollution ? If we be let us then go to Jesus, that we may be sensible of our own deplorable and dangerous condition ; it is only by him we can obtain a discovery of ourselves, or see the need we stand in of his salvation ; but on the contrary are we convinced what atrocious sinners we have been ? Do we see our sins have affronted the majesty, holiness,

lines, and goodness of God ? Are we sensible that by sin we have denied the divine authority, been at enmity with infinite holiness, and proved ungrateful, notwithstanding innumerable benefits natural and providential ? Do our consciences charge us not only with sins against the law, but against the gospel ? Do we perceive each of our iniquities to be of infinite malignity ? Are we convinced we are in a state of sin, yea dead in sin ; nay do we esteem ourselves transgressors in Adam ? Do we despair of salvation by our own supposed righteousness either in whole or in part ? Do we indeed desire to renounce our own righteousness and ability, sensible that we are utterly unrighteous, and that we cannot spiritually quicken our own souls ? Though these be our circumstances let us not esteem our state better because of these things, and say we are in divine favor : for we are sensible of our misery. This would be a conclusion very absurd, since the deepest legal conviction is not conversion ; yea it would argue that our convictions were but slight, because they who are most convinced think they are the least so : for to suppose we are fully convinced is an argument of our blindness. However, if the language of our hearts be, what shall we do to be saved ; let us look both from the law and ourselves to Jesus, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world ; even to his atonement and righteousness

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for complete acceptance; but if we find we cannot look, cannot come to him, may we then turn our eye to him in the characters of prophet and king, to illuminate and draw us, to shew us his suitability, and incline our hearts to come, and to trust in him alone for divine favor, convinced that he is the only way to a reconciled God, and also to confide for quickening and renewing grace, that, that repentance which is the fruit of a genuine love may be begotten in us.

C H A P. XXII.

MERCY GLORIFIED BY THE SUBORDINATE
MEANS, THROUGH WHICH ITS SPECIAL
BLESSINGS ARE BESTOWED.

Luke i. 6. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.

THOUGH no man will truly seek God until he be quickened and made spiritually alive, and though all the duties which a natural man can perform be utterly void of all real good; yet this consideration that it is the divine purpose to have mercy on many of the fallen children of Adam, demands the attention, diligence, and assiduity of every

every individual, in the exercise of all means which God hath appointed to bring home his people. With relation to worldly acquisitions especially if they be of extraordinary worth, how industrious are men to obtain them, though they be persuaded but one of a thousand will certainly succeed? No attention, study, nor diligence is in this case wanting, whilst the concerns of the soul are either totally or shamefully neglected; this plainly proves man's inability to soul concerns is not of a natural but a moral nature; that is, he sees them not as lovely, he has no liking to them, and because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and therefore impossible it should love the Lord for his own sake, (as all believers do, in a greater or less degree) man can now scarcely be persuaded to pay any attention to things of a religious nature, even upon the mere principles of self-love. Hence the backwardness to think of God, to pray unto him, to read his word, to examine and compare the heart with the law of God, to meditate, to converse with serious christians, and patiently to attend to the arguments advanced in favor of divine truths. However a man dead in trespasses and sins may do so much, yet where is the man that doth it? Self-love in most men hath a greater respect to the body's welfare than the soul's. This is an atrocious crime pointed directly against mercy. Its language must be, either that God is

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all mercy, or he will shew them no mercy. But if either of these positions be true, why any concern at all? If God be all mercy, then we may live as we list; or if there be no mercy for us, what avail our endeavors? Though this be a natural inference deduced from the above disposition of self-love, yet men having confused notions of God's mercy and justice, suppose these attributes in him in their manifestation respecting the salvation of sinners, to be like mercy and justice exercised by them; therefore they will be doing something to obtain the divine favor be it ever so little, though at the same time the interests of this life are preferred to the next. If conscience were permitted to speak out, it would presently declare that both mercy and justice in God are infinite, and must by some means or other harmonize in man's salvation, and to slight the concerns of mercy is to reject it. If to be unfeelingly concerned about our eternal state, if to be preferring our present welfare to our future, is so absurd as above-mentioned, and if it be a truth that God's perfections must harmonize, or we are lost for ever; why so backward to investigate this truth, and to become spiritually and savingly acquainted with it? If truth had declared that none of Adam's posterity should be saved, or had pointed out the persons by name who should: duties and ordinances to that purpose would have been quite unprofitable

unprofitable to all in the former case, and in the latter to those who were openly rejected ; but as no one knows his election but by effectual calling, it is highly reasonable every individual should use such means, whereby God usually bestows that blessing. Though a man without faith cannot pray in spirit, yet ought he entirely to neglect prayer ? Though he may not have the hearing ear, must he then turn away his ear from hearing ? Though the bible be to him as a sealed book, ought he to reject it ? Yea in every means God has appointed should not men be employed, though they cannot be spiritually so before grace received ? " Works, " faith the Church of England, done before the " grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spi- " rit are not pleasant to God, for as much as they " spring not out of faith in Jesus Christ, neither " do they make men meet to receive grace, or " (as the school authors say) deserve the grace of " congruity ; yea rather for that they are not " done as God hath willed and commanded them " to be done, we doubt not, but they have the " nature of sin." Article 13. Though all our legal endeavors will neither qualify nor quicken, though our attendance upon all duties and ordinances, neither deserve, nor render us meet for grace ; yet if we have any apprehensions of divine mercy, justice requires that we use every possible means in order to be truly and properly in-

formed of the nature of mercy ; and whatsoever relates unto it, the way wherein it is gracious, the blessings it bestows, on whom it calls, and the nature of its call. But if men cast off all regard for their souls, and reject the duties and ordinances of religion, they certainly are not in the way to hear its voice, even in its outward call, much less as it speaks to the heart ; for generally the most atrocious sinners to whom mercy is frequently in a saving manner revealed, are through Divine Providence brought to one or another of the Lord's appointments, (notwithstanding at first the baseness of their motive) ere the gracious work is wrought upon their heart. What is mercy glorified, but mercy declared, manifested, and displayed ? Though the appointment of such ordinances as sinners are bound to observe be not the highest display of mercy, yet it is an open declaration that God is both merciful and willing to shew mercy. If hope had been entirely cut off where would have been the use of ordinances ? Direct hatred is the fruit of despair : hence Satan curses the fountain of blessedness. Wherefore all the various, but false religions that are in the world, do in some measure declare that God is merciful ; how much more then those ordinances which he himself hath appointed ! When we consider how the holiness, goodness, majesty, and truth of God have been injured and affronted through sin, what

what divine justice demands as a satisfaction, what the moral circumstance of every sinner is, does not the faintest discovery of mercy in God to them declare its nature to be infinite ? If this be allowed, mercy then is certainly glorified ; for as infinite power is declared to be such as well in the existence of an atom as in the creation of the universe, so doth the establishment of ordinances declare as truly God's boundless mercy, as the blessedness of saints in glory. The imperfection of our thoughts hereof arises from an ignorance of our desert, what the demerit of sin is, and what a depraved condition we are in. Did we see our misery, the least token from God of everlasting favor, not only attained but attainable would appear infinite. How irrational then is the conduct of the sinner ! Though his religious actions be not good because not agreeable to the divine will both in matter and form, yet because he fails in the latter is the former to be neglected ? If they were right in both he would be no longer in an unregenerate state, and consequently be for ever blessed. How then does it behove him to wait at the pool of ordinances, if peradventure the Lord may bless him, and still persevere in God's ways to seek him, until he seeks him aright !

C H A P. XXIII.

MERCY GLORIFIED IN REGENERATION.

Titus iii. 5. According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration.

REGENERATION is such a change upon the whole human soul that now there dwells in it a proper aptitude, tendency and inclination to divine and spiritual things which before had no existence. This, as a work done, we are to conceive of not according to the idea of an act, but a principle. This change is the effect or operation of the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit, and in adults should be considered as the immediate and first proper fruit of effectual calling: special vocation being the opening of the heart, regeneration the heart opened. Were we to consider the former as an action of the Holy Spirit upon the mind subsequent to regeneration, souls would be born again without his agency. And if we ourselves be no way active therein as indeed we are not, our new birth must exist without a cause. The calling of the spirit of which we now speak is not the simple ministry of the word, neither can any ordinances whatsoever have that appellation; nor is there in them the least power to regenerate

regenerate the heart. In the creation of natural light the omnipotent word of Jehovah was spoken, then light existed ; so in the new creation God first commands, then spiritual light existeth. Our hearts are in total darkness before he shines into them, and when he does so, then they are illuminated. Hence the apostle says, *2 Cor. iv. 6. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* The priority of effectual calling to regeneration in point of order only, and not of time, best agrees with the gospel ministry, yea with what truth declares. Peter in his first epistle, chap i. 23. faith, *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* But if effectual calling were after regeneration, the gospel could not be that instrument that it is declared to be. Again in James i. 18. it is said, *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;* on which Dr. Guise thus paraphrases, " We " who believe have a most eminent and endearing " demonstration, that the best of all blessings de- " rive from him ; as it is not from any wisdom, " or power, worthiness, or merit in us, but merely " of his own good will, and sovereign pleasure, " according to his abundant mercy, that he has " regenerated and begotten us to a lively hope of " an everlasting inheritance, *John i. 13. 1 Pet. i.*

" 3, 4. by means of the gospel ; which is his true
 " and faithful word, and is rendered efficacious
 " in the hand of the spirit, for producing the
 " new birth, and all the holiness and happiness
 " that ensue upon it." As then the gospel per-
 suades morally, the Spirit of God through the
 gospel persuades efficaciously. The former is
 like a voice to the naturally dead ; the latter is as
 a voice which quickens the dead. As the call of
 Christ to Lazarus was both quickening and com-
 manding, because instantly obeyed ; so is the
 Spirit's voice to the heart by the gospel. When
 by a figure effectual calling is put for the glorious
 things it calls unto, it then may be considered as
 the fruit of regeneration, as also regeneration it-
 self. Nay it may take in faith and all the fruits of
 faith, and may comprehend not only all the
 graces of the Spirit, but all the workings and
 operations of those graces ; and still more, may
 include every thing that is excellent and praise-
 worthy in the christian's conversation and practice.
 Hence Paul to the *Theſſalonians* faith, 1 *Theſſ.* iv.
 7. *God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto hol-*
iness. And the apostle Peter adds, 1 *Pet.* v. 10.
But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his
eternal glory by Christ Jeſus. Now who doth not see
 that this call is really prior to the enjoyment of
 the things called to ? Are we not called before we
 enter the heavenly kingdom ? If we be, doth not
 this

this divine call to the kingdom of grace precede that gracious state to which we are called? But to be satisfied in this matter let us attend to the apostle Paul. *Rom. ix. 11.* *For the children* (says he) *being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.* If the latter part of this verse is to be taken actively it proves the person acting to be God, and therefore must not only precede justification, but even regeneration itself, in respect to order. However we must fix this as a certain truth, that effectual calling, regeneration, faith in Christ Jesus, love unto, and fear of him, nay every grace of God's Spirit begin all to be in the same instant in the man whom the Lord calls; yet all in their respective order. Now as effectual calling intends the acting of almighty power in changing the heart of man, wherein the creature is wholly passive; and regeneration the change wrought. We begin with the latter, as being not only the sure pledge of eternal glory, but the commencement thereof; and the source and spring of all spiritual acts, either of mind or body, put forth by the creature. Regeneration says *Turretin Comp.* page 372. "*Continet vero mutationem, totius hominis; puta;* *" intellectus, voluntatis, conscientiae, affectuum, potentiarum.*" i. e. It comprises indeed a change of the whole man; that is to say, of the intellect, will,

will, conscience, affections and powers. Therefore as observed before, the man hath now a suitable aptitude, tendency, and inclination both for, and towards divine and spiritual things ; that is, he is now spiritually alive. He hath an eye to behold Christ, he hath an ear to hear his voice, and an heart to love and fear him. To describe this source of spiritual good by its fruits and effects would be to anticipate our subject, and yet to enlarge on it as a first principle is not easy ; however we may safely say that it is not a physical change, for then its subject would not be the same man as before this change took place ; and to affirm it purely ethical or moral would border on rashness, yet as it is produced through the instrumentality of truth, it appears to be of an ethical nature, and what more I dare not determine : thus much we may affirm, that all the moral suasion possible would never effect it, nor can in the least contribute unto it, unless as an instrument in the hand of divine omnipotence. *Ephes. ii. 10.*

2 Cor. v. 17. Regeneration though it be perfect in its parts no faculty being without it, nor any grace but what it contains, yet it doth not render man its subject as holy as the saints in glory, because the very same natural powers and faculties, of which it is the accident, are as universally as before, polluted with original sin, only now there is in every faculty two contrary principles. Original

ginal pollution has now a competitor, which is fully inclined to make war against it, and not suffer it to reign in any respect whatsoever ; neither in the understanding, memory, conscience, imagination, will or affections, and will give it no quarter until it expire. This new man at first is but weak and tender like an infant, though perfect in his parts, yet is capable of growth ; but these particulars more properly relate to the fruits of regeneration. Peter saith, 1 Pet. ii. 2. *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.* And John in his first epistle, chap. ii. 12, 13. speaks of little children, young men, and fathers in Christ. What is here observed of the new, the contrary may be observed of the old man, for though perfect in all his parts, he is not in a prosperous but crucified state. As the new man like the house of David waxeth stronger and stronger, the old man like the house of Saul waxeth weaker and weaker ; and though it give many a struggle like a dying man, yet it is but to sink the lower. A dying man is perfectly a man until the last gasp be fetched, so the body of sin is perfect until it expire ; and then the new man being entirely at liberty acts without opposition. Amongst good men there still remain different sentiments, touching the nature of this divine operation on the soul ; however to suppose it to be an independent principle must certainly be injurious to God's

glory : for is there any creature in the universe independent of God ? Doth not the same power which created all things out of nothing maintain in being the whole creation ? And would it not sink into its primitive nothing, were he to suspend the operations of his power ? If this be true in the natural creation, certainly it is as true in the spiritual creation. Wherefore the psalmist prays, *Psalm li. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me.* If then regeneration be the fruit of effectual calling, and effectual calling be through the instrumentality of the gospel, if the gospel be an exhibition of Christ's satisfaction to law and justice, and a call of mercy to sinners through it, certainly mercy is then glorified in the regeneration of God's people : nay therein all the divine attributes and perfections are glorified both in word and deed, for if we were to suppose none saved by power, the price of redemption would be diminished in its lustre, and in our view the divine perfections come short of their honor. What a ground of comfort have we here for the true christian ! To such a one would I say O soul ! hast thou any evidences of thy regeneration ? If thou hast thy language is, God is exalted. His holiness, justice, truth and mercy, nay his sovereignty also are all displayed in thee ; for thou hast that upon thee, even the righteousness of Christ which honors the former ; and that bestowed

ftowed upon, and wrought in thee, which displays the latter. Examine then what the Lord hath done for thee. Labor to be convinced that the good work is begun in thine heart. See whether thou dost not truly love the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ, and a reconciled God in him. Examine if sin be not hateful to thee because Christ atoned for it, righteousness lovely because it is the image of thy Savior. See whether God's people be amiable in thy view, and for this reason chiefly because they are the trophies of gospel grace. By this practice thou wilt give, in some measure, the praise required and not only subje~~tively~~, but in an active and objective manner magnify the great wonders of divine grace, through the redemption which the only begotten Son of God hath effected.

C H A P. XXIV.

CONVERSION AND FAITH HONOR MERCY,
IN HARMONY WITH EVERY MORAL
ATTRIBUTE OF JEHOVAH.

John vi. 45. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.

SOME there are who observe in handling the subject of conversion, that first the mind perceives, or hath a conviction of its guiltiness and impurity ; discovers the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the malignity of its nature, as contrary to the holy law of God ; and in consequence of which abhors it, as most vile and loathsome. Secondly, it discerns the demerit of sin, so as heartily to acquiesce in the justice of the punishment due to it, and hence cries out what shall I do to be saved ? And thirdly, that the mind is convinced of the absolute impossibility of contributing in the least degree to its recovery, out of this miserable estate. Now all these things must be allowed as the experience of a converted man ; but not that conversion therein consists, or that it appears from the word of God that these are the first fruits of regeneration. To the man himself who is indeed regenerated,

rated, as also to his christian companions who listen to his complaints, this order may appear to be real. However that these are in reality the first fruits of the new birth, or that the essence of saving conversion previous to justification consists therein must be denied ; for thus viewed what can those things possibly be more than the operations of the divine Spirit upon the conscience, through the instrumentality of the law only ? Which if granted I leave the reader to draw the inference. If they be of an evangelical nature, then are they the fruit of such a conversion, and not the conversion itself, nor previous to it : conversion being considered as the first true and saving turn of the heart to God, and also the first fruit and effect of regeneration. Now this will appear if we consider that the law is neither an instrument to quicken the dead in sin, nor an object of faith for justification, nor nor our way to God ; because all who seek him in that way shall never find him ; yea thereby instead of turning to, they turn from him : *For as many (says an inspired apostle) as are of the works of the law are under the curse.* Gal. iii. 10. And in another place he asserts, Rom. vii. 5, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in his members to bring forth fruit unto death.— If then the law worketh wrath, Rom. iv. 15. if instead of mortifying sin it only irritates it, and render the sinner through despair more sinful ;

nay

nay if sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in the apostle all manner of concupiscence; add to all this if by the operation of the law on the conscience sin becomes exceedingly sinful, or a sinner, *Rom.* vii. 8,—13. how is it possible that legal workings only should be indeed the first and immediate fruit of regeneration, or that conversion should consist therein? Wherefore it is evident the more refined our legal notions are, if we misplace or attribute too much unto them; that is, if we either make them conditions to faith, or qualifications for faith, or if we suppose them to be the fruits or evidences of special grace prior to believing, so much the more are they pernicious and dangerous. But on the other hand, if such convictions as are noticed in the beginning of this chapter be held as the fruit and effect of a true gospel confidence, though the subject of such a confidence may not be sensible he is so, then they may be very salutary and useful; and produced, as so many evidences of true love to God and his law. To conclude (in respect to one's own salvation) that such convictions spring from an evangelical principle is very difficult, unless the mind is conscious that it hath some true perceptions of, and thirstings after Christ. Dr. Owen in his Treatise on Forgiveness, page 64, where he speaks of the convictions not of one who never believed on Christ, says, “ How shall a

“ man

" man know that his humiliation is evangelical,
 " that his sorrow is according to God ? It is not
 " from hence he may be resolved that he doth not
 " in it as Cain did, who cried that his sins were
 " greater than he could bear, and so departed
 " from the presence of the Lord ; nor as Judas
 " did, who repented and hanged himself ; nor as
 " Felix did who trembled for a while, and then re-
 " turned to his lusts ; nor as the Jews did mentioned
 " by the prophet, pine away under their iniquities
 " because of their vexation ; nor doth he divert his
 " thoughts to other things to relieve his soul in
 " his trouble, nor fix upon a righteousness of his
 " own, nor slothfully lie down under his perplex-
 " ity ; but in the midst of it applies himself to
 " God in Christ for pardon and mercy, and it is
 " the soul's application unto God for forgiveness,
 " and not its sense of sin, that gives unto God the
 " glory of his grace." In page 50 he says " There
 " is a two fold sense of sin ; the one is general
 " and notional whereby a man knows what sin is,
 " that himself is a sinner, that he is guilty of this
 " or that, these or those sins, only his heart is not
 " affected proportionally to the discovery and
 " knowledge which he hath of these things : the
 " other is active and efficacious, the soul being
 " acquainted with the nature of sin, with its own
 " guilt in reference to sin in general, as also to
 " this or that sin in particular, is universally in-

" fluenced

"fluenced by that apprehension unto suitable
 "affections and operations."—Now that the
 Doctor was far from making conviction to be con-
 version you may perceive by his words following :
 for he adds, "Even this is two-fold. First, le-
 "gal or antecedaneous unto conversion. Second-
 "ly, evangelical and previous to the recovery
 "from depths :" alluding to a believer returning
 from great backslidings. Neither does he consider
 the former as intervening between regeneration
 and conversion ; for in page 334, he observes as
 follows : "Regeneration (says he) doth not in
 "order of time precede the soul's interest in for-
 "giveness, that is with God ; or its being made
 "partaker of the pardon of sin, I say no more
 "but that it doth not precede in order of time.
 "not determining which hath precedence in or-
 "der of nature. that I confess to be the method
 "which the gospel leads unto, viz. that absolution,
 "acquittal, or the pardon of sin is the founda-
 "tion of the communication of all saving grace
 "unto the soul, and so precedeth all grace in the
 "sinner whatever ; but because this absolution
 "or pardon of sin is to be received by faith,
 "whereby the soul is really made partaker of it,
 "and all the benefits belonging thereto, and that
 "faith also is the radical grace, which we re-
 "ceive in regeneration : for it is by faith that
 "our hearts are purified as an instrument in the

.. hand

“ hand of the great purifier the Spirit of God. I place
 “ these two together, and shall not dispute as to
 “ their priority in nature, but in time the one doth
 “ not precede the other.” If the Doctor doubted
 whether justification or regeneration was first in
 order of nature, certainly he could not esteem
 conversion any thing else but the turning of the
 mind, in a way of believing, unto the Lord Jesus
 Christ as the justification of sinners ; or a putting
 forth an act of the mind on the satisfaction of
 Christ, as the way to God for acceptance and justi-
 fication : or the first coming of the sinner unto
 Christ, in a way of faith, and to God by him. —
 That this is the truth I think we cannot well quef-
 tion if we pay any deference to the words follow-
 ing : *John xiv. 6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the
 way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the
 Father but by me.* Nay if we consider well the scrip-
 ture prefixed to this chapter we must so conclude ;
 for if the teaching of the Father leadeth to Christ,
 and Christ be the alone way to the Father, as the
 Father of mercies, conversion and the first motion
 of faith must be one and the same thing. Observe
 then by conversion we do not mean the first work
 of God on the heart. Conversion, according to
 our present view, includes the action of the crea-
 ture, for being turned we turn, and thereby is
 distinguished from regeneration ; and being the
 first spiritual action of the regenerate man, is to

be also distinguished from that conversion which is the fruit of justification, and springs from true repentance: therefore we are to esteem it so, as immediately, in point of order, preceding justification, and not confound it with the conversion of God's people after sins and backslidings; what we now intend seems to be expressed by the following scriptures, *Zecl. ix. 12. Turn ye to the strong hold ye prisoners of hope. John vi. 37. and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*: which certainly intends the first motion of the new creature terminating on Christ as the material cause of justification. Faith, previous to this act, hath no virtue at all to move or excite the other graces to action. Nay it is nothing in itself separate from Christ its grand object; for it is only the radical grace, as it lays hold on Christ as the way to mercy. The very form of it consists in a perception of, and trust to the complete satisfaction of Jesus, without which it hath no existence in the minds of adults. Therefore all evidences of grace we should consider as evidences of justification, and not of our worthiness or meetness for it. To take notice what the properties of a justifying faith are, is not to our present purpose; this shall be done hereafter: but with respect to its nature as it justifies, we say, that in the man who worketh not, and is yet in an ungodly estate, it begins to act by virtue alone of the gospel warrant, through the

the energy of the divine spirit on Christ's satisfaction as its object, for favor with God as its end. The gospel then being the medium of regeneration, as that by which the spirit is bestowed, and through which by his almighty power this divine operation is wrought ; so also is it in his hand the instrument of our conversion, and therein mercy appears to be eminently glorified, because the objects of this mercy are those who before were ungodly and worked not to obtain it ; for they being drawn by divine grace and coming by the medium of Christ's death and righteousness only, they honor all the divine perfections, declaring thereby that in Christ alone they all harmonize with mercy, to the glory of God. Hath Christ established by his satisfaction a sure foundation for the sinner, to the honor of divine holiness, truth, and justice ? They by coming thereto by the authority of the gospel warrant, set to their seal that God is glorified in Christ, and true to his declarations of mercy to the chief of sinners.— Though it be our duty to compare our hearts and ways with the law of God, though we ought to be convinced of our guilt and misery, yet as sinners we should use the law, not as a ministration of righteousness, but of condemnation ; not in order to be better, but to be sensible how vile and weak we are ; not as a ministration of life, but of death ; persuaded that no sense of our deplorable

state, nor any conviction of what the law expects, though united, can possibly produce the least good thought. May we not then as others, seek by it to support our false expectations, but rather to destroy them until at last being driven out of all good opinion of ourselves, we earnestly seek for grace to come to Jesus, and to God through him, as sinners that have nothing to plead but pure mercy.

C H A P. XXV.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, A DISPLAY OF MERCY.

Rom. iii. 20. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.

JUSTIFICATION in the sight of God is to be considered in a proper and forensic sense, expressed by absolution in judgment, or a reckoning and declaring any one just. When the Lord does so by any of his creatures, they cannot but be blessed; and those that be not justified in his sight, cannot but be cursed: hence the absurdity of moral goodness in man condemned. Though the law justifies no man, yet thousands of the human race the Lord hath justified, and therein displayed

played all the grandeur and excellency of his mercy. In this matter every perception, thought, desire, inclination, purpose, resolution, word, and action, which hath any relation to the moral law he rejects, because they come not up to what the law requires. Therefore justification is thro' the boundless mercy and unmeasurable compassion of our God. But we may say, how is it that infinite purity can delight in creatures void of all good, who have done nothing but sinned against him, yea are dead to him as a God of holiness; yet even but one out of the many millions of sins of which they are guilty deserve his eternal vengeance and displeasure? Though this be an important question, the scripture hath furnished us with an answer. *Rom. iii. 24. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.* This is full to our satisfaction; for here we see holiness, justice, and truth in all their splendor, brightness, and resplendence. To bring the least good thought by way of addition to this work of redemption, would be infinitely more foolish than to light a candle to the sun when in the meridian. It would be a dishonor to the Son of God, an affront to these divine attributes, and a flat denial of the infinity of God's mercy; for what is the best righteousness of man before justification but unrighteousness, being destitute of love the only source of moral good? Some may question

tion this doctrine and reply, though men love not God as they should, yet we cannot believe they are utterly void thereof, and therefore they should do something towards their justification.— But can you tell me how there can be any true love to God in that soul that is excluded the divine favor? If a man be not justified fully, he is not justified at all. This must be either by works or by grace. It is impossible to be mixed. And were it so Christ would be dishonored, his righteousness as the righteousness of God appear insufficient, and not one divine attribute glorified: for on this plan the righteousness of Christ is limited. Now we know that two finites can never constitute an infinite, which is vainly supposed by uniting the righteousness of the sinner to that of Christ.— The justification therefore the gospel maintains is through the satisfaction of Jesus by faith only; and by faith because it profits nothing unless received. Now when the appointed time is fully come that God's elect people are by faith to receive this divine satisfaction, then mercy takes such a possession of them as it will never quit, until it hath accomplished all its purposes. Having proceeded thus far we may now consider conversion in a more ample manner than treated in the preceding chapter, and view it not only in relation to the gospel but also to the law; for as the essence of faith is to justify, so the fruit of justification is an entire conversion

conversion of the whole man to God. Hence such views of God and all things belonging to him, quite different in nature from what before were ; because the faith which hath now taken place being the faith of God's elect, all things are beheld after another sort than is the nature of a legal or historical faith to do. First then it beholds God not altogether as a severe and inexorable judge; now the man the subject of this grace sees him though as a being of infinite purity and holiness, and who will in no wise spare the guilty, yet as a God of unbounded love and mercy also. Though before he was most pungently convinced of the divine justice and holiness, yet he viewed not these perfections so as to approve of them, yea the truth of God did most grievously afflict him, and instead of being his joy was his sorrow ; nay all the divine attributes appeared unto him not as friends, but as enemies. Again. It is the property of justifying faith to perceive the mediator in all his offices far otherwise than viewed by one who is the subject of an historical and legal faith only. All true believers are cast as into a gospel mould, and therefore their views are evangelical. But ere justifying faith took place in any believer his apprehensions of Christ, notwithstanding all his gifts, were but of a legal nature. Perhaps he expected Christ would enable him to reconcile himself to God by assisting him so to act, whereby

he might, if not merit, yet qualify himself for the divine favor. But now in a supernatural manner he looks to Christ for grace that he may by faith apprehend him alone for justification ; for it is not to be supposed where justifying faith is, there is always the evidence of it so as that the subject thereof is sure he possesses it ; far otherwise, because such persons are frequently under the greatest doubts, and feel the workings of unbelief more than others, yet their trust is like the mariner's needle to the north pole, it can fix no where but on Christ for divine acceptance ; and when diverted from this it still inclines thereto. Now they look not to Christ, as heretofore, for grace to save themselves, but to trust in him only for salvation ; which they see to be alone through his satisfaction, eying him as constituted a prophet and king for the purpose of drawing sinners to himself. Now is the Redeemer in all his characters, become the object of the believer's confidence ; he trusts in him for grace to be conformed to the gospel, that through gospel conformity the law as the rule of his conduct may be his delight ; he sees Christ suitable to all his miseries and necessities. If he views him as a prophet he looks to be enlightened ; if as a king to be subjugated and protected ; and if as a priest at the right hand of God, he looks to him to intercede in his behalf ; nay he in some measure beholds Christ as his

his husband, brother, friend, and kinsman, according as he is informed of these relations by the word of truth. The property also of this faith is to look on the scriptures not as the word of man, but as the word of God. What is revealed therein it readily credits, nay delights in. To pick and cull from this divine treasure, and to despise what remains it abhors. It is sufficient that it is the word of the Lord ; that is what faith regards. But a meer historical faith doth not so. It does not approve of all that is revealed, for though it beholds truth, it is with irksomeness ; neither doth regard it according to the ends for which it is made known, but on the contrary is apt to legalize the gospel, and gospelize the law. An historical faith views the sacred oracles as the revelation of a severe exactor and terrible judge. A saving faith beholds them as containing the will of the father of mercies, the good pleasure of a precious Jesus, and sees it is all calculated for the glory of God, and for the real profit and benefit of the soul. O how sweet, says faith, are the promises ! How glorious are the commands of my heavenly Father ! Though these be the properties of faith, yet as its subject hath another principle, in nature quite opposite, and which constantly militates with this grace, views of a different kind may frequently appear to sense, which however will be always matter of grief and sorrow to the believer. We

must further observe, that the providences of God are accounted by faith as most wise, holy and gracious. It says, *Psalm xxv. 10.* All the paths of the *Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.* Yea it exclaims *Psalm cxlv. 17.* *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.* An historical and legal faith is of a different sentiment ; being sinfully concerned for self, it cannot approve of the Lord's providences unless they be grateful to sense. As for God's glory it does not regard ; and whatever is afflictive it considers as a judgment : but saving faith knows how to extract good out of evil, sweet out of bitter : yea in proportion to its strength and exercise will make the soul rejoice in the sharpest tribulation ; and more than this, will turn the evil of sin to advantage ; for when it is loaded therewith it is inclined to more than usual diligence, and in the event raises the soul to a greater pitch in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness than before sin began its onset. True faith abhors the flesh, the world, and the devil ; it sees them so as to detest and loath them. A legal faith though it may oppose, yet abhors not : were it not for fear of judgment and damnation its opposition would cease. How contrary the grace we are now considering ; for it looks on them not so much in the light of enemies to the soul, as enemies to Christ, to the glory of God, and grievous

to the Holy Spirit. When it is burdened with their power and prevalence, its application for strength is to Christ ; knowing in him there is a rich abundance, and that he is an overflowing fountain of grace ; this it does because it feels its own weakness, and knows that in itself it is nothing. Its nature is such that it can never be at peace with these enemies ; for when unable to vanquish it will stoutly contend, and when faint will still oppose. Lastly the people of God it sees as amiable, the appointments of God as desirable ; yea it says of Christ and all that appertains unto him, with the spouse in the Canticles, chap. v. 16. *His mouth is most sweet, yea he is altogether lovely !* Herein we may perceive a conversion of the whole soul unto God. The thoughts, desires and affections turned unto him. As the mind and will were before inclined to Christ for acceptance, now they are turned in a way of love and delight to the things which make for his glory ; the fruit whereof is such an external conversion as that sin hath no more dominion over them in their conversation and carriage. Therefore we may add that the subjects of this grace are turned from sin to righteousness, from vanity to sobriety, and from the honors, pleasures, and profits of this world to godliness. Conversion then may be considered both before and after justification.— Before, as expressive of the first motion of faith

towards Christ ; and after it as significant of the immediate effect of Christ believed on ; which is a going forth of the heart to and for God in the true exercise of every grace ; and consequently inclusive of delight in the law as well as the gospel, for it is declared, *1 John v. 4. Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

C H A P. XXVI.

SANCTIFICATION THE EFFECT OF JUSTIFYING MERCY.

Acts xv. 9. And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

THESE words without any explanation sufficiently vindicate the title of this chapter ; they shew also that the Lord had removed the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, of Mosaic ceremonies ; resolving to save both from the guilt and pollution of sin, by the energy of his spirit through faith in his Son, without the intervention of typical services, the antitype being not only come, but having finished the whole work of redemption ; received a public testimony thereof from the divine Father, by his resurrection

tion from the dead ; and finally ascended to the holiest of all, and there sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Though sanctification, considered as a principle, may according to the opinion of some, be formed in regeneration ; yet without doubt its holy actions are not the cause but the effect of justification by faith ; otherwise we should be justified as godly, and not as ungodly. Brine in his Treatise on various Subjects asserts page 146 that “ Regeneration is sanctification radically.”— Nay the scripture seems to look this way, though it maintains at the same time, as in the text before us, that if any one be not by faith justified, he is as yet in an unregenerate estate. These things have induced some to question (among whom was the noted Dr. Owen) which in the order of nature is to be reckoned first, regeneration or justifying faith. Owen on Forgiveness, page 334. The advancement of purity and spirituality in our souls is our sanctification progressively considered ; and in this view may be distinguished from conversion. It is not a new addition of graces but a more strong and vigorous exercise of those implanted in regeneration, not simply their motion, for thus we have considered conversion in the last chapter, but an increasing strength in every grace against the operations and actings of the old man in all his various members ; yea it may comprehend

prehend every act of faith for justification, subsequent to the first act thereof for that purpose. For though justifying faith in its after actings for justification builds not on the evidence of sanctification, yet these motions thereof spring from a sanctified heart. Now if conversion to holiness be the fruit of justification by faith, then consequently progressive holiness or sanctification must be so also ; nay it appears that in the same way in which holiness first began to act, so its actings must be maintained and completed. Now in order to proceed it is previously necessary to say something touching the various graces of God's spirit, their connexion and production. We would then enquire

First, What is the nature of justifying faith ?

The answer is, that the nature of it consists in assurance and appropriation. The denial of this principle by many of the Lord's people amounts not to a proof of its fallacy ; for their rejection of it springs from a mistake of terms, and not of matter. But that we may be satisfied on this point we will enquire also

First, Negatively : what this assurance is not ?

Secondly, What it is ?

First, The assurance of faith is not a persuasion in the man who hath it of his particular election, this

this is only deduced from the evidence of effectual calling. Neither is it an assurance to its subject that Christ in very deed stood in his law place or room, and that when satisfaction was made to divine justice, it was made for him ; because redemption then for the elect was finished. This is as impossible as the former particular.— Nor is it his assured belief he is effectually called ; here many confine the term assurance of faith.— And because experience frequently evinces that many of the Lord's people enjoy not such an assurance of faith, they esteem it rather a privilege, than the nature of this grace. Now in this view thereof their conclusion is just. But this is the assurance of sense, resulting either from present or past experience. But

Secondly, What is this assurance ? Answer.— It is a persuasion wrought in the heart by the spirit of God, through the gospel only, that the objects to be looked to for salvation, are both sufficient and true, and therefore cannot deceive him who looks. Hence it is rather an assurance that the grounds or foundation of confidence will not fail, than an assurance to its subject that he truly believes. The manslayer under the law pressed by the avenger of blood was persuaded, because of the Lord's appointment, that the city of refuge to which he fled would prove to him a sure asylum : so in faith there

there is an assurance of the sufficiency of Christ to protect from pursuing justice, and also that God commands sinners to take refuge in him.— Now what is the immediate consequence of this but taking actual refuge accordingly? This is tantamount to appropriation: for it is a making that of particular benefit, which before lay indefinite in the grant. If the Lord declare the satisfaction of his only begotten Son, to be his own appointment for sinners indefinitely to look unto; and if Christ hath said, that they who so look have everlasting life; what can this confidence in Christ be but a belief of the person looking, that his sins were laid upon him, and that Christ was a complete substitute in his stead, to present him unrebukeable in the sight of infinite holiness? If this be not granted, how then should the sinner apprehend Christ for his personal justification in the divine sight? Will the belief that he is a substitute for the elect only be sufficient? Or can he properly rest on the satisfaction of Christ for justification, if he dare not believe he satisfied for him? But if he do properly believe that Christ suffered for his iniquities, made complete satisfaction on his account. he believes it not by virtue of any vain conclusion that he was elected from eternity to salvation, nor in that he is not so bad as others nor because he is already in a state of grace, (which cannot possibly be previous to faith;) but because

truth

truth hath said, 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* See more on this head—Hervey, Theron and Aspasio, vol. iii. p. 348, Theron is introduced objecting against this point—says he: “No, Aspasio; neither would a “persuasion that the summer house is mine. Aspasio,—true: but a belief that Christ is mine is “like entering the summer house.” The weak christian from hence hath no room to be discouraged. Yet he may be apt to think that if faith be assurance, he is no believer; for such being attentive to their own hearts, and judging of this grace according to their feelings, are frequently apt to think they are destitute of it. These I would refer to what Boston says in his Notes on the Marrow of Modern Divinity, page 160. However, as many may not be furnished with that book, I will quote the passage. “First he (the author) doth “not here teach that assurance of faith whereby “believers are certainly assured that they are in “the state of grace, the which is founded upon the “evidence of grace, but an assurance which is in “faith, in the direct acts thereof, founded upon “the word of God, *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. *John* iii. “16. and this is nothing else but a fiducial appropriating persuasion. Secondly, he doth “not determine this assurance, or persuasion, to “be full or to exclude doubting; he faith not be

" fully persuaded, but be verily persuaded, which
 " speaks only the reality of the persuasion, and
 " doth not at all concern the degree of it. And
 " it is manifest from his distinguishing between
 " faith of adherence, and faith of evidence, page
 " 101, that according to him saving faith may be
 " without evidence. And so one may have this
 " assurance and persuasion, and yet not know af-
 " surely that he hath it, but need marks to dis-
 " cover it by ; for though a man cannot but be
 " conscious of an act of his own soul, as to the
 " substance of the act, yet he may be in the dark,
 " as to the specifical nature of it ; than which no-
 " thing is more ordinary amongst serious chris-
 " tians." Though this explanation of faith be a
 support to the weak christian, yet it is far from
 admitting no certainty in this grace ; for if there
 were, unbelief would be no sin ; and we should
 adopt the popish doctrine, that it is lawful to
 doubt. The Lord's veracity and Christ's suffi-
 ciency render the least doubt criminal. Hope is
 the offspring of faith ; and in order next unto it.
 When faith first believes on Christ for justifica-
 tion hope immediately expects the blessings there-
 of. As faith hath no other foundation in the first
 instance, than the gospel promise through Christ to
 sinners indefinitely, so hath hope. Therefore
 Christ alone is the foundation of hope ; because
 God invites and commands sinners to hope in him.

As

As faith first (unsupported by any evidence of grace received) confides ; so hope expects acceptance and salvation independent thereof. I speak now of the first and weakest acts of these graces, and not of a faith and hope, which have much sensible comfort and experience to support them. When faith first beholds Christ for justification, it then confides in him for holiness. What is the fruit hereof ? Why, hope immediately expects both acceptance and purity, for it is not satisfied but with sensible enjoyment. If faith, grace is mine, and glory is mine, hope expects them. Doth faith say all the promises of God are in Christ, yea, and in him Amen ? Hope looks out for their fulfilment. These then, as active graces, have the precedence ; but if we would speak of peace, as it is peace with God, we ought certainly to place it before hope ; for what is it less than the purification of the conscience ? Or an heart sprinkled from an evil conscience. *Heb. ix. 14. x. 22.* Dr. Gill in his exposition of *Rom. v. 1.* says “ Peace with God stands in the first place ; “ and is so called to distinguish it from peace with “ men ; which persons, though justified by faith “ in Christ’s righteousness, may not have.” As peace with God goes before hope, so must joy : peace begets joy. Wherefore Paul praying in behalf of the Romans, for an increase of their hope, says *Rom. xv. 13.* *Now the God of hope fill*

you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. For these graces succeed: faith as light issues from its source, because justifying faith presents to the soul a God reconciled and pacified. Indeed the subject of this grace may think far otherwise, but then this arises from the deep sense the believer hath of the holiness, justice and majesty of God, the great sense of his own vileness, and the stupendous demerit of iniquity. Also the mighty workings of corruption and temptation prevent him from a discovery of his faith in its feeble state. And because he feels himself more miserable than when he could delight in forbidden objects, he thinks the peace and joy of the Lord have not as yet possessed his bosom. From what hath been observed it appears that faith, as it justifies, the graces of peace, joy, and hope relate to the gospel, and precede all those which have respect to both law and gospel jointly as a rule of duty. — The first of those alluded to is love. This regards in the first place the Lord's plan of redemption, and then the ends for which it was laid. By this rule it behoves us to try the nature of our love. A supposed love of God's law separate and apart from a love to his gospel may deceive us. It is impossible such a love can be the fruit of a justifying faith, or spring from a true hope in the Lord's mercy. This is the love of the Pharisee and self-righteous.

righteous. *Gal. ii. 19. I* (says Paul) *through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*— And again he says, chap. v. 6. *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.* This breathes a different spirit: for what is a true love to God but a delight in his glory? Wherefore if we think to love the law of God in such a way, wherein it is impossible God should be thereby glorified, (and this mistake all are guilty of indeed, whose love runs not in a gospel channel) it is certainly a dangerous delusion. True love is first taken up with Christ and his redemption. *Unto you therefore which believe* (says Peter) *he is precious.* *1 Pet. ii. 7.* Then it longs for a conformity to his image, because it is the end for which Christ was given, even to redeem us by power as well as by price. *Titus ii. 14. Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Let us now then ask ourselves the following questions: do I indeed love the gospel of Christ? Do I love it because as in a glass, I there see the death and righteousness of Christ in the behalf of sinners? Is it precious unto me because the person of Christ is therein displayed, and the harmony of the divine perfections discovered? Do I love the Lord's people both as objects of his mercy, and subjects of his grace; that is, do

I love them because God loves them, and because they bear his image ? Again. How stands my heart affected towards the scriptures of truth ? Are they precious unto me ? Do I peruse them with holy breathings, that they may be to me as the word of God indeed ? Do I long to have them written in my heart and life ? Do I compare myself with the law that I may discover the necessity of the gospel ? And do I trust in the gospel that I may be conformed to the law ? Do I love Christ in all his offices, characters and relations ; and for all the purposes to which his mediation was appointed and ordained ? Now a love of this sort begets true godly sorrow. It is so called because God is the author of it. It is not the operation of free-will, produced by natural conscience, neither is it of a legal nature and from the fear of hell, because then love would not be the source thereof ; but it is a sorrow for God, as some express it, or on account of God, his honor, interest and glory ; and therefore respects law and gospel in that order we have observed above. It is a displicency with sin as an opposition to both, and as in direct contrariety to all the perfections of Jehovah : his goodness, grace and mercy ; his holiness, justice and truth. Now from this grace flows genuine repentance. Repentance in holy scripture is to be understood in various senses, which not being properly attended to by many, has

has been creative of much injury and prejudice to the souls of men; for apprehending this word in a too contracted and limited sense, they have been led to deny the free-grace of God exhibited in the gospel; and to lay the foundation of hope, both for time and eternity on the law. What consequences have followed let the lives and dispositions of professing christians in general declare. Turretin in his Compend. Theologiae, page 371, says, "Regeneration is as the quickening of the dead. Repentance is a return to a sound mind. Conversion is a change and amendment of life, expressed by the original word *μετανοία*." In this view it is difficult to apprehend his meaning, unless we suppose he considers the same original word, as expressive both of the cause and effect; for we know it is most frequently used to signify the grace of repentance. Wherefore his meaning may be thus: regeneration is spiritual life. Repentance the motion of the mind in consequence thereof (so we have considered conversion in chapter the 24th) and conversion the effect of that motion, comprehending both justification and sanctification as cause and effect. This view of repentance seems to be confirmed by the following passages, viz. *Mark i. 15. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.* *Acts iii. 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out:* that is, change your minds and believe the gospel. This construction

construction of the word repentance appears just from *Heb.* xii. 17. *For he* (viz. Esau) *found no place for repentance*, though he sought it carefully with tears: that is, he could not induce Isaac to change his mind. Again, *Rom.* xi. 29. *For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance*: God being without change and alteration, and continuing his peculiar blessings to his people for ever. However dubious this word may be in *Acts* xi. 28, yet if we suppose repentance to import a purpose of amendment in our moral conduct, with respect to what the law solely considered requires of us, (in which view most consider it as prior to, and a condition of faith for justification) we then conclude that it springs from godly sorrow, the fruit of that faith which works by love. The nature of this repentance is described, 2 *Cor.* vii. 11. “ For behold this selfsame thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge? ” On which, and the verse preceding, Doctor Guyse very justly paraphrases, says he, (ver. 10.) “ For spiritual “ grief and contrition of soul like yours, Godward, “ and according to his will, on account of offences “ committed against him has the happiest tendencies and effects: it produces that evangelical “ repentance, under apprehensions of the mercy “ of

of God in Christ, which consists in a thorough change of the mind, heart and life, with regard to sin and duty; and is connected with, and will certainly issue in, a complete deliverance from sin and wrath, and advancement to eternal glory; yea in the very nature of things, as well as by the ordination of God, it always goes before, and is practised more or less 'till an actual enjoyment of final salvation; and so this is an excellent sort of repentance, that need not, & ought not, nor ever was, or will be repented of." Here we may mention the different sorts of repentance which are not the offspring of an evangelical faith in Christ, and the mercy of God through him, and therefore are not evidential of a state of grace. The first is a legal repentance, *Matt. xxvii. 3*: arising from an apprehension of justice, blended with unscriptural views of mercy. If mercy under every view be excluded, then it becomes a desperate repentance; as in Judas, Cain, Pharaoh and Ahab. Indeed it must be acknowledged that legal conviction producing legal repentance, more or less, generally precedes regeneration and faith; but as it precedes faith, it is accompanied with no true hatred of sin, but only a dreadful fear of punishment. The third sort is a late repentance, for the most part unsound, yet let no one suppose that there is no possibility of true repentance at the eleventh hour. The fourth

kind is an indiscreet repentance, such as superstitious persons are subjects of, shewn by their watchings, fastings, pilgrimages, scourging their bodies, &c. In the fifth place we may add, a feigned repentance. Sixthly, an inconstant repentance; for the subjects of it return to their sins. And lastly, an imperfect repentance; as in those who repent of some sins and not of others, which they know to be sins. But on verfe 11, the Doctor shews the nature of true repentance.—

“ Now it is the first and not the last of these kinds
 “ of repentance, that my letter was the means of
 “ producing in you; for observe, as I myself do
 “ with great pleasure and thankfulness to God,
 “ your ingenuous mourning on account of what
 “ you have done, and of what has been found
 “ among you against him, has, through divine
 “ grace, wrought in an holy manner, and brought
 “ forth fruits meet for repentance. Observe
 “ what thoughtfulness, care, and diligence, it
 “ worked in you, to comply with my orders, and
 “ to approve yourselves to God in rectifying what
 “ was amiss: yea, what happy influence it had
 “ upon you to take such measures as might fur-
 “ nish out a plea (*απολογίαν*) against any accusation,
 “ as if you would partake with the incestuous per-
 “ son in his guilt; or would allow of, indulge,
 “ or connive at any sin in yourselves or others;
 “ yea, what holy indignation and warm resent-
 “ ment

" ment it raised in your souls against your own
 " iniquities, and against the sins of that delin-
 " quent and his abettors, who had so notoriously
 " dishonored the name of Christ, and both trou-
 " bled and defiled the church : yea, what an aw-
 " ful reverential fear of God, and of his displea-
 " sure and sore rebukes it wrought in you, toge-
 " ther with an humble jealousy over yourselves,
 " and cautious fear and concern lest any accursed
 " thing should be still found with you; or lest
 " through the power of temptation ye should fall
 " into the like or any other sins again, to pro-
 " voke the Lord to anger : yea, what earnest de-
 " fire it excited in you after a thorough reformation
 " by putting away that evil person and every evil
 " thing from among you; (*1 Cor. v. 13.*) and by
 " doing what might be well pleasing to God thro'
 " Jesus Christ, and might be to your own and
 " others edification, satisfaction, advantage, and
 " comfort : yea, what sacred zeal it inflamed you
 " with for the glory of God, the credit of reli-
 " gion, and of my apostolic authority, and for
 " the peace and order of the church : yea, be-
 " hold, how it made you take a sort of holy ven-
 " geance upon yourselves, like persons that could
 " not tell how to forgive yourselves, in reflection
 " on your own defaults ; and how it engaged
 " you to inflict deserved punishment on the scan-
 " dalous offender, by casting him out of your

“ holy communion. In all these penitential and
 “ commendable ways of expressing your godly
 “ sorrow, with regard to what has been so faulty
 “ among you, ye have shewn that your consciences
 “ have been purged from its guilt by the blood
 “ of Christ ; and that ye as a church stand clear
 “ from all further charges on that account, as
 “ being forgiven of God, and no longer to be re-
 “ proached or reproved for it by men.” Hence
 we may perceive the source, order, and nature
 of evangelical repentance ; for what the apostle
 hath delivered relative to the Corinthians touch-
 ing the incestuous person, is certainly a pattern
 of the repentance of God’s people, in reference
 to every sin of which they are convinced ; for their
 filial fear, which is consistent with the strongest
 confidence in God’s love and mercy, teaches them
 to regard the holiness of God out of love, and
 therefore to fly from every iniquity, and prosec-
 ute those things which are divinely commanded.
 In the Old Testament also we have a description
 of this repentance for it is said in *Zecl. xii. 10.*
And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,
 (viz. Christ) *and they shall mourn for him as one*
mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for
him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. Fear
 which is next to be considered is a grace of the
 Spirit, the offspring of faith and love, arising
 from a perception of God’s mercy, holiness, and
 greatness,

greatness, and thence loath to displease God by sin. Wherefore the Psalmist saith, *Psalm cxxx. 4.* *There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.* This fear is filial or childlike. The nature thereof is to keep back from vice and to constrain to duty, and to whatever may glorify the name of God. It is an awe of God's holiness and majesty as engaged to bless, and therefore not a fear of falling away. It is not in contrariety to assurance but presumption; whence it follows, the stronger our faith is the greater our fear will be. Humility or humbleness of mind, is not a self-disregard or carelessness; does not consist in will-worship, compliments; and civility, nor a dissembling submission, but in an inward sight and sense of our great unworthiness. It is quick to discern temptation. Hypocrisy it hates. To sufferings and afflictions it submits; and is content in every dispensation of Providence. In its acting towards God it arrogates no excellency: *Psalm cxv. 1.* *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake,* is its language; therefore self-righteousness is inconsistent with this grace. It is said, *Hab. ii. 4.* *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* And Paul adds, *1 Cor. i. 30, 31.* *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written,*

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He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. He who by justifying faith submits himself to the Lord's plan of salvation, doth honor God and Christ in the gospel ; and through a submission to the gospel, pays a genuine deference to the law, as in the hands of a mediator. To increase therefore in humility towards God is to possess an increase of faith in Christ, as our worthiness and sufficiency. Humility with respect to our neighbour springs from faith's perception of the glories and perfections of God; from an enlarged spiritual acquaintance with the divine law, a deep and special knowledge of the gospel of Christ, and as the fruit of these things, from a striking conviction of what we ought to be. Thus taught we now appear so mean in our own view that we are apt to think ourselves the chief of sinners, and least of saints.— When the prophet Isaiah beheld the Lord he cries out, *Isaiah vi. 5. Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* Like to this is the language of Job, chap. xlvi. 56. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.— Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* If then we desire to grow in this grace, let us pray for a larger discovery of the divine perfections engaged in our behalf, through the redemption of Christ, which being so beheld will not fail to produce a deep sense of our own nothingness, and

and a ready will to glorify God in all things. These being the principal graces, parts, or members of the new man, demanded our more particular attention ; the remaining graces to be considered being either a compound of the former, or deriving their motion or operation from the opposition which sin, satan, and the world offer to the new creature, require not so particular an explication : for even the grace of patience would not be necessary, were there no enemies to contend with. But to return. Patience is the product of faith and humility. Faith says, the Lord is faithful ; but patience speaks the humble language of the prophet, *Lam. iii. 26. It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* Hence it appears nearly allied to hope, for hope simply is expectation, but patience a quiet expectation of promised blessings. Therefore faith believes, hope expects, and patience waits for the salvation promised, notwithstanding sins, temptations, afflictions, and discouragements. It is the property of this grace to bear up against carnal sense and reason, and to prefer the word of a promising God to all sensible appearances. Now as it honors divine truth promising, so likewise it will not fail to reverence the divine holiness and purity. Its voice is, *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Lam. iii. 39.* Yea it will say with the prophet in verse

the

the 22d, *It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* A patient waiting then for a God of mercy is always connected with a quiet submission to a God of holiness: this appears from *Micah* vii. 9. *I will bear* (says the prophet) *the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.* The christian being the subject of these graces, now contends with his old man (the most dangerous of all his enemies) prompted and excited by satan, and the world; as these increase and grow in vigor and strength, and the body of sin and death is weakened within us, our sanctification as a progressive work is evidenced. This warfare is not between the body and the mind, but between the body of sin in the mind, consisting of the understanding, will, and affections, aiming at nothing less than a full and perfect manifestation of its nature and power, through the members of the natural body. I say this warfare is between this corrupt and active principle, and that new nature of which we have been speaking, which aims not only to prevent the former from exposing itself to view, but also to mortify it in its inward motions and operations, and that in all the natural faculties of soul and body. As the old man hath many members, so hath the new. In the former there is ignorance, unbelief,

unbelief, diffidence, pride, forgetfulness, flavid fear, hardness of heart, love of ease, pleasure, and profit, &c. All these attempt to reign in the understanding, memory, conscience, imagination, will, and affections: aiming in their turns to settle the man either in a presumptuous course of life, to the maintenance of whatsoever is grateful to self-worth, or self-ease; or to drive him to utter despair, and so to dishonor God by an entire denial of his mercy. In the new man there is knowledge or faith, hope, peace, joy, love, godly sorrow, repentance, humility, filial fear, and patience. As the former only in pretence seeks the prosperity of self, or when detected of its deceit the open ruin of it; the latter, viz, the new man, seeks the truest interest of self, in subordination to the glory of God. Now what may be said in respect to these opposite principles, the same may be affirmed touching the corruptions, and graces of which they are respectively the body.— As the former acting offensively is counteracted by the latter; so the latter acting offensively is counteracted by the former. This warfare is in every natural faculty of the soul. The principle of sin tends to God's dishonor, and a full perfection of guilt and misery. The gracious principle to God's glory, and to complete holiness and happiness.— Hence a regenerate man is not perfectly holy in any one thought or deed; neither is he as an un-

regenerate man in any thing perfectly evil ; that is, with respect to his acts either of mind or body. He neither can do good as glorified saints, nor do evil as the natural man doth. As the first motions of the old man are through unbelief ; so of the new through faith. Unbelief increasing, strengthens all other corruptions ; so faith the other graces. The corrupt principle is powerfully excited by satan and the world, either in a way of allurement or terror. If satan and the world cannot charm they will endeavor to drive to desperation ; 'tis their busines to threaten in order to lull. But if the divine Spirit through the law awakens, and by the gospel draws, satan then will stir up the old man to unbelief, and endeavor to drive the foul to despair ; which the world will promote by its entanglements and persecutions.— As the old man is excited by satan and the world, so is the new man by the spirit of God. And as the former have their various means to that end, so the divine Spirit uses means with his people, such as prayer, reading, and hearing the word, meditation, examination, christian conference, and other ordinances, which he draws unto ; and in and by which he quickens and strengthens to the spiritual combat : nay sometimes he uses sore afflictions and temptations, when the old man hath produced in them a very faint resistance.— Some persons there are who deny that the law of

sin is seated in the minds of the regenerate ; affirming that they are perfect in their minds, and that the defilement to which they are subject comes from the body only. There say they the law of sin only resides. What is the consequence of this doctrine but that they are as perfect in their souls as ever they can be, and at death they need not look for a further change ? How can such persons look to the righteousness of Christ at that solemn moment, if they believe themselves perfect already ? The meetness of the christian through his imperfect sanctification here can only be esteemed such, as it is an earnest of the fulness of it ; therefore he is to trust to the mercy of God through Christ alone for a perfection in holiness, as he did at first for the commencement thereof. The law of sin is a privative evil, cleaving to the soul in its every faculty, and will be so even to the last gasp. Were the soul to enter eternity as the subject of sin and grace it would be unfit for heaven, because it would be still sinful, as every believer is whilst in the body. What does the apostle Paul mean by fleshly wisdom and fleshly mind, *2 Cor. i. 12. Col. ii. 18.* if the soul be not primarily and chiefly the subject of sin ? Why does he exhort the believing Corinthians to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of spirit, if their spirits were entirely perfect ? *2 Cor. vii. 1.* Or the Romans to be transformed by the renewing

of their mind, if their mind were capable of no further renewal? *Rom. xii. 2.* But you will answer, does not the apostle say; *Rom. vii. 25.* *So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin?* I reply, if the word flesh here mentioned means nothing more than the human body, what construction will you put upon the fifth verse of the same chapter? His words are in that verse, *For when we were in the flesh the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.* If you say the union of the soul and body, you will by the rule of consequence assert, that the apostle was not in the body, when he wrote this chapter. As this cannot be his meaning, let us compare this verse with the 18th of the same chapter, and we shall find that by being in the flesh evidently intends the reign and rule of the old man; for although the apostle in this verse last mentioned, says not that he was then in the flesh, yet without doubt he gives us to understand that the flesh was still in him, even in all the faculties of his mind, but deprived of its absolute dominion and sway through a principle of a contrary nature called spirit, of which he was then also the subject. But if an objection should be still raised, affirming that by being in the flesh is intended the moral death both of soul and body; and by a regenerate estate is intended the absolute purity of the soul, yet

yet under the entire dominion of the body considered as the seat of original pollution ; why should the apostle pray that the believing Romans might be transformed in the renewing of their mind, whose mind stood in need of no renewal ? *Rom. xii. 2.* Or how was it possible that the apostle by the members of his body should perform one good act, even materially considered, if the body as wholly sinful controll'd the soul : for he says, verse 14, "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." Leaving then these dreams we conclude, that the word mind contained in the 23d and 25th verses is a figurative expression, intending the new man in contradistinction to the old ; or that corrupt principle which still cleaves to every faculty of soul and body. Doctor Owen in his Treatise of the Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainder of Indwelling Sin in Believers, observes that the seat of this law of sin is in the heart. *Eccles. ix. 3. Mat. xv. 19. Gen. vi. 5. Luke vi. 45.* "The heart (says he) in the scripture is variously used. Sometimes for the mind and understanding ; sometimes for the will ; sometimes for the affections ; sometimes for the conscience ; sometimes for the whole soul. Generally it denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it ; not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they

“ they all concur in doing good or evil. The
 “ mind as it enquireth, discerneth, and judgeth
 “ what is to be done, what refused; the will as
 “ it chuseth, or refuseth, and avoids; the affec-
 “ tions as they like, or dislike, cleave to, or have
 “ an aversation from that which is proposed to
 “ them; the conscience as it warns and deter-
 “ mines, are altogether called the heart. And
 “ in this sense it is that we say, the seat and sub-
 “ jeft of this law of sin is the heart of man.” —

Pages 27, 28, 29. Thus having taken some notice of the nature and seat of this warfare, we will proceed to observe some other graces which arise therefrom, or are concerned therein.—Zeal then is also a grace of God's Spirit. It is an earnest desire of doing good, and hindering evil, joined with sound knowledge, and fervent love of God's glory, and our neighbour's good. 'Tis an affection of grief and anger flowing from love; for what a man ardently loveth he is solicitous to promote, and is grieved when it is discountenanced. Hence the description of the Lord's people. *Titus ii. 14, Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* What militates with this grace is lukewarmness, or spiritual indifferency, arising from the prevalency of corruption over the graces already mentioned. Long-suffering is a grace very necessary in the christian warfare.

fare. It supposes a clear and perspicuous perception of evil ; and not only anger, but the highest indignation against it. And in this respect it resembles the patience and forbearance of God, who being omniscient, omnipotent, and infinitely holy, yet long endures with sinners who grievously offend him. This grace springs from faith, love, and patience. Faith and love beget christian fortitude, and patience added thereto begets long-suffering. Paul saw the preciousness and necessity hereof, and therefore prayed that the Colloians chap. i. 11. might be strengthened with all might, according to the Lord's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. Gentleness is a mixture of love and humility, which discovers itself by a sweetnes and easiness of carriage to others ; quite opposite to contention and strife. It is studious to be useful and beneficial, moved thereto from cordial pity and compassion. Goodness is love to men drawn forth into practice ; would not do any thing prejudicial unto them, and is ready to administer unto their necessities whether relative to their souls or bodies. Meekness is a grace enabling us to suffer abuses and injuries, without a desire of revenge. It differs from long-suffering, being a dismission of anger, but where there is just cause thereof. Meekness is slow thereto and not easily provoked, teachable and easy to be persuaded, submissive to God

and

and Christ. not elated with prosperity. It shews itself amongst men by self-diffidence as contrasted with self-conceit, and by a gospel innocence and simplicity ; its source is faith, love, and humility. Where this grace resides there is an acknowledgement of self-emptiness and insufficiency, a conformity to Christ's will through love, and an aptitude to refer unto God every injury received, according to the exhortation given, *Rom. xii. 19.* *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* Now before we begin to consider the operation of these graces, it is necessary to say something of temperance also ; which is the continence or moderation of the mind in all things, that are not spiritual and eternal ; and likewise is of use touching self-estimation, christian sympathy and condescension, hence the exhortation *Rom. xii. 3, 16.* “ For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly (or with moderation) according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” And again.— “ Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate : be not wise in your own conceits.” Wherefore this grace hath relation to all the affections, and respects all things relating to the body, as meat, drink, apparel, recreation, and so forth.

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We come now to experience, which is nothing more than the effect of grace in act, for the word signifies trial or proof. Before grace then be in exercise there can be no experience. The gospel exhorts sinners to come to Christ by faith for pardon, acceptance, and salvation. When this is done experience hath a being and not before.— Hence a justifying faith is proved to be such by the train of other graces which follow. These being in act and exercise under the influence of faith, against their respective opposing corruptions, experience increases ; which experience is nothing else than the sealing witness, or operative testimony of the divine Spirit to the truth of his word of grace. Now as the actings of faith and other graces increase in strength, so doth experience. It is the property of experience to beget evidence, which is not presently discerned by its subject, unless the former be strong and lively.— There may be experience in many a heart for months and years together where there is little evidence, because experience may be weak and low, yet some of the Lord's people almost as soon as they are the subjects of faith are assured they are so. Here it would be necessary to say something in respect to that faith which is the fruit of experience ; as faith the source thereof has been before particularly noticed. The faith then of which we now speak is what most people call the

faith of evidence, that is, a belief in God's people that they are the subjects of grace. For it is a perception of the soul of its own gracious actings, whence it infers that it is indeed born again. This is always in proportion to the strength of faith, properly so called, and which we have long since handled. 'Tis certain a strong faith, and which is only founded on the veracity of God and sufficiency of Christ, may have many and mighty enemies to contend with, and before these enemies are subdued the faith of evidence may be weak and languid; yet when the former obtains the victory, the latter, viz. the faith of evidence will be strengthened and revived; and the more and greater the victories of the believer are, the brighter it will shine. Hence Paul's exhortation, 2 *Cor.* xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves how that Christ is in you except ye be reprobates," (*αδοκιμοις*) or there being something amiss in you? The clearer and stronger a fiducial faith is in its actings the more evident it is to its subject both in itself and fruits, provided he be skilful in the word of righteousness, and capable of drawing a proper inference. This perception or evidence of faith first considered, some call, as observed above, the faith of evidence.—Others the reflex act of faith, which epithets appear very suitable to scripture, as 1 *John* ii. 3.—x. 29,

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It may be increased even to full assurance in a sovereign way and manner, by an overpowering irradiation of the divine spirit. Ambrose upon Evidences faith, Evid. 17. " My assurance of " faith, and my spiritual safety, is first both by " the evidence of internal vision or reflection, " for I know that I believe as certainly as I know " that I live." Though this may be and is undoubtedly the case with many, yet only with such as have been of some considerable standing in the school of Christ : because it is not enough to be sensible of inward feelings, but to be able to judge of them, which is not always the case with young christians ; for I speak not of assurance in apprehension but in reality. It must be granted that where the ground of faith is spiritually discerned, and the nature and actings of faith clearly known, it certainly may be self-evident in its most lively actings ; but it is usually from the vigorous actings of the other graces, as the immediate effect thereof, that most christians derive their faith of evidence. Having now in a very brief manner taken some notice of the various graces of the spirit of God in the hearts of believers, their order, and nature ; hinted at the spiritual combat of which they are the subjects ; and just touched on the experiences and evidences of God's people, would reassume the truth of which this chapter is the subject, viz. that sanctification as a

progressive work is the effect of justifying mercy. As effectual calling, regeneration, conversion, and justification, are in point of order only, and not of time, one before another, so sanctification as here considered, is the fruit of justification ; yet they both commenced at the same instant. The term or expression sanctification hath in scripture various senses, but as we have fixed the sense already in which we choose to consider it, therefore to say how differently it is understood would be needless. It is generally divided into two parts, viz. mortification, and vivification. But as this distinction is difficult to be conceived unless it be by the effects produced on its subjects, viz. the hearts and lives of men, being thereby weaned from sin and inclined to holiness, I would say that this work consists in a progressive increase of all the graces of the spirit in vigor and strength, and that in an evangelical and gospel order. There is no greater impediment to the growth of sanctification than the self-righteousness and self-sufficiency of the heart. Many sinful corruptions, yea many outward acts of iniquity, are not half so detrimental ; because faith in the redemption of Christ, both in itself and fruits, may rise above them, for the Lord vouchsafes to pardon the daily infirmities of his heritage. But the former strikes at the whole life of the christian ; its aim is to separate him from the foundation of all his hopes both

both for time and eternity ; whilst the self-sufficiency of his heart would cut him off from the fountain of all divine and spiritual supplies. If salvation be of grace, if it be through Christ our head, what can be a greater evil than to expect it for our own doings, and imagine to spin it out of our own bowels ? This then is the tendency of a legal principle. Though when justification takes place it be deprived of its dominion, yet it is very powerful in those who are but babes in Christ. Wherefore the apostle Peter exhorts the saints to whom he wrote, *2 Pet. iii. 18: To grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* If the least degree of a true and spiritual knowledge of God and Christ be eternal life begun, *John xvii. 3.* certainly we cannot grow in grace but as we increase in that knowledge. If to those who believe, Christ be precious, *1 Pet. ii. 7.* certainly to them who increase in faith he will be more precious ; and the more precious Christ is experienced to be the more every grace of God's Spirit is strengthened. What a striking proof of this is there in *Ephes. iii. 16, 17, 18, 19.* The apostle begins, verse 14. “ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man : ” and to shew wherein

this

this strength consists, he adds, verse 17. " That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"— Doctor Guyse paraphrasing on the last of these verses speaks as follows, viz. " And my hearts " desire for you is, that ye may be enabled yet " more and more to have just apprehensions and " enlarged views by faith ; together with an ex- " perimental feeling of the virtue, power, and " sweetness of the transcendent, free, and sove- " reign love of Christ, and of God through him, " in its most excellent manifestations, fruits, and " effects, which in itself and in its wonderful ope- " rations, provisions, and designs, infinitely sur- " passeth all the comprehension and adequate ideas " of men and angels, (verse 8 and 10) in every " one of the aforesaid boundless dimensions : and " all this I beg of God for you, to the end that " upon the whole, ye may be still more and more " partakers of a divine nature, (2 Pet. i. 4.) and " may be enriched as much as possible with all that " fulness of light and grace, holiness, joy, and " peace in this present life, which God has de- " signed and prepared in his eternal councils of " wisdom and love, and in the merit of his Son, " and

" and has promised in his covenant, and commu-
 " nicates to his chief favourites, at their best sea-
 " sons while they are here." From all which it
 is undeniable that a legal state is a state of spiritual
 death ; the legality of the heart therefore which
 still remains, gives the greatest vigor to corrupt
 nature. Were we perfectly evangelical (I speak
 not of doctrine and speculation only) we should be
 perfectly holy and righteous. It is unbelief built
 on legal views and apprehensions enfeebles and
 debilitates grace within us. 'Tis only the appre-
 hension of free and undeserved favor, through a
 mediator, begets and maintains a disposition to
 love and glorify God. As every grace the true
 christian possesses is the effect of mercy, so their
 increase and growth is by the efficacious influen-
 ces of the spirit of mercy, through faith in that
 divine medium of mercy, which the God of mercy
 hath appointed for all, whether saints or sinners
 to look unto. As in justification all the divine at-
 tributes are glorified, because faith alone is the
 instrument, so in sanctification are they also dis-
 played, as through faith every other grace is to
 grow, and at last to be perfected therewith : for
 through him who hath magnified the law and made
 it honorable, the Spirit of the Lord is training up
 those who before were dead in trespasses and sins,
 for a celestial and eternal state of perfect holiness
 and happiness. David when he commanded the

ark of the covenant to be brought up from the house of Obed-Edom, said, 1 *Chron.* xv. 13.—“ Because ye (viz. the Levites) did it not at the first the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.” Alluding to chap. xiii. 10. where it is said, viz.—“ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him because he put his hand to the ark ; and there he died before God,” Thus doth self-righteousness ; as if Christ the antitype of the ark needed its assistance, yea as if there were not in him a sufficiency of merit and power. It is no small offence to invert the order of grace, therefore watchfulness in this respect is more necessary than in any other. If there was a particular order in the first actings of each grace, should we not aim at the same order in our actings thereof ? If faith be not the leader the whole order is inverted, nay 'tis beyond a doubt that neither of the graces are truly in exercise. We must love God through faith in his love to us, or we shall never truly love him. When our minds then through legal workings would procure his favor and grace, by any thing we imagine is in our power, this brings a death upon our souls ; and instead of going forward we are going backward, for we are seeking to justice for salvation instead of mercy, and not in the name of Christ but our own. You will say then is a simple believing the only thing

thing we are to attend to ? God forbid : no, all means are to be used, as prayer, meditation, examination, hearing, reading, christian conference, communicating at the Lord's table, and every other means. But what are all these to the man who has no faith ? Or can they profit him that hath it if it be not properly in exercise ? If not, in every means or duty a due attention should be paid to our graces, that they be exercised in due order ; for the more the believer grows herein, the more will he grow in grace. Paul speaking to the Theffalonians of God's work among them, says, *1 Thes. i. 8. But also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad, so that we need not speak any thing.* Here faith by a figure is put for itself and fruits ; therefore what we have now insisted on we see confirmed. Our spiritual life is not in our own hands, 'tis hid with Christ in God. *Col. iii. 3.* Hence it appears that as it was begun in us, so it must be maintained and increased. It was begun by believing, and must advance by believing : i. e. faith must grow, in order that its fruits may. It is folly to aim at the increase of the effect without regarding the cause from whence the effect must flow. But self-righteousness prompts us to this madness, that it might deprive the Lord of his glory, and set up itself as independent. Faith only honors God and Christ, and the Lord honors faith ; therefore 'tis said *John i. 16. And of his fulness*

sinnes have all we received, and grace for grace. But Paul's question to the believing Corinthians determines at once the propriety of this point, *1 Cor. iv. 7. And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* After what has been said, some person however may put this question, is the law of no use in the great work of sanctification? Answer, certainly it is: under the influence of the divine Spirit it is useful to shew the christian his wants, that occasion may be given to faith for application to Jesus. As the law is a discovery of the Lord's purity and holiness, it reveals to us our impurity and emptiness. Hence being truly convinced of our vileness and insufficiency, faith is excited by gospel declarations to look unto Christ for righteousness and strength, and for such supplies, the need of which it before perceived not. Now it is not the law which sanctifies, but faith taking occasion by these discoveries to act in a more enlarged and vigorous manner. Law and gospel, if properly viewed and used, mightily profit each other. The law then points from itself to the gospel; and the gospel leads back to the law, as in the hands of a mediator; not as a condemning law, but as a rule of love to God for all his mercies, and to our fellow christians for Christ's sake, nay to our enemies for the Lord's sake. If any be yet inquisitive touching sanctification as a progressive work upon the hearts of God's people, and how it is to be sought

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and maintained, let such acquaint themselves with Marshall's treatise on that subject. In the preceding chapter it was observed that faith in a justified man, is a holy principle and its property is to rejoice in the will of God. Now if this be a truth it cannot by any means be at peace with sinful self, but rather as it increaseth in strength sinful self must necessarily lose ground: because faith being the source of every other grace, they all therefore flourish and increase in proportion as faith itself doth. When natural self at any time prefers worldly ease, honor, and profit to Christ and holiness, then faith contends with it, as much as with the sinful inclination, self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency of our hearts; for the nature of it is to rise above every impediment that stands in the way of God's glory, the soul's spiritual prosperity, and its final salvation: and therefore sanctification advances even by means of the opposition it meets with. Grace certainly is stronger if it enables the christian to maintain his character in truth, under great and sore trials with some degree of propriety, than it was before he was so exercised, though outwardly he appeared more consistent. Nay that the very slips and backslidings of God's people, have led them to that diligence in examination, and have been the occasion so to excite them to, and in the duties of religion, that they have been over-ruled for good, has been put

beyond all doubt. Though grace may super-abound over the abundings of sin, yet faith never sins that grace may abound. If the christian at any time grow not in joy and comfort, he then grows in self-loathing in renunciation of righteous self, and to a more evangelical confidence in Christ, as the Alpha and Omega of his salvation. What is the effect hereof ? Is it not an increased purity and uprightness in his conduct ? Were there no sensible stirrings of corruption, grace would be almost dormant. We have seldom an heart to go to God, unless we have some errand. But when our enemies press us we cry the more mightily. It is by victories obtained that grace shines the brighter, and generally our sanctification is most advanced under the greatest oppositions.— But to conclude this chapter I would thus address the believer :—Seek not O christian the increase of this grace through the law and moral duties, but seek it by faith ; the former thou oughtest always to observe and walk in, but it is the latter that quickens. Labor to see what the law requires, then speed thee to Jesus. Keep up a lively sense through believing in Christ of thine acceptance with the Father : this will maintain thy love unto him, and draw out thine heart to trust for sanctifying influence. Let the declarations of the gospel be the warrant of thy confidence, and not thy own feelings. Labor to behold Jesus for every purpose

purpose for which he is set forth. If thou view him as a prophet and a king, let it then be first to teach and enable thee to come to his satisfaction, as thy foundation for acceptance, and then to conform thee to his image, teach thee thy duty, yea rule in and over thee. A conformity to his law is the end for which he was revealed, but thou canst not obtain that end, but by his grace in a way of faith. Sanctification is evidenced by a working from life, not for it ; not by the number, but by the nature of our acts of obedience. It appears not in works performed, but in the holy manner of their performance. It is only faith in mercy through Christ begets and maintains yea increases true love to God : where faith is not, ten thousand moral performances would be of no avail, because love is wanting. When thou treasurest up thy experience, do it after faith put forth, not before it ; therefore consider the warrant, ground and nature of thy faith, and then consider its fruits. By these means faith and its fruits may be reciprocally tried one by another. From thy experiences thus deduce thy evidences. Use them to thankfulness and gratitude, but lean not upon them instead of Christ and the free promise. Keep up a lively persuasion by evidence of thy relation to God, but still expect to receive freely the blessings of grace on Christ's account. Otherwise an evidence of interest will be the foundation of thy expectation,

expectation, and not Christ and God's free favor through him. Endeavor also to be persuaded that it is according to God's mercy thou art saved, not only at first by regeneration, but also day by day through the renewing of the Holy Ghost: and look to be saved at last through Christ alone, knowing that whilst in the body thou finnest in all thou dost.

C H A P. XXVII.

THE CONQUEST OF MERCY AT DEATH.

Psalm cxvii. 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints.

THOUGH death to many of God's people appears not with a lovely aspect, yet it performs in their behalf the most friendly office. In their sight their death is not precious, but in the Lord's sight it is so: for it is not the effect of his anger but his appointment as a reconciled Father to deliver them completely from every annoyance. Hence the death of the righteous is compared to a sweet and refreshing sleep. *Rev. xiv. 13.* "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

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This deliverance then may be said to be

First, A deliverance from the inbeing of sin.— The death of saints is the death of sin. When the soul quits the body then sin expires ; neither a moment before nor a moment after the believer's last gasp ; otherwise the preciousness of his death would not appear. That these assertions are founded in truth, is obvious from many parts of scripture. Paul speaking in his own, and the names of the believing Corinthians, says, 2 *Cor.* v. 6, 7, 8, 9. “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith and not by sight.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.” Now if we compare these passages of scripture, with that prefixed to this chapter, then it will appear that death will be an introduction to the believer into a state of consummate holiness and purity.

Secondly, As death delivers from sin, so also from affliction. These are inseparable companions. Though affliction be not a penal evil to God's people, yet it is a fatherly chastisement: but when sin shall be entirely done away every kind of affliction will cease ; for says holy David, *Psalm* xvi. 11. *In thy presence there is fulness of joy.*— Whence it follows that perfect bliss is the fruit of perfect

perfect holiness, as tribulation is of sin. Though God deal not with his people whilst in the body, as a God of vindictive justice, their persons being lovely in his sight considered in Christ their head, yet if they be subjects of sin they shall know that he is a God of purity, by his paternal corrections. Though the Lord will glorify his holiness even in the afflictions of his saints, yet he will do it not to their loss but advantage. For we are divinely assured that all their fruit is to take away iniquity, and to render their subjects more like unto their heavenly Father. If as before observed corruption and moral defilement cease with the natural life of the saints, certainly the time of their death is a season wherein mercy is most eminently glorified ; because the objects of its special regard are now perfectly redeemed, in a way of operation, from that grand evil most injurious to God's honor, and from pain its attendant, which is the unhappiness of the creature. Every saint when he enters heaven is the occasion of fresh joy to its blest inhabitants, and demands from them a new song of praise. If there be joy there on the repentance of a sinner, certainly his admission to those mansions of bliss is an addition thereunto. But to conclude. In what way are the people of God to expect this holiness and felicity ? Answer. In the same way they obtained the earnest of it : even by faith. For it is said of the worthies, *Heb.*

xi. 13. " These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." If sin did not cleave to the soul even to the last, there would be no room for faith. If in a regenerate man it only cleaves to the body the soul is pure, and faith needless, evidence is only necessary. But on the contrary if the most righteous man upon earth be unfit to appear before God, unless his soul in death be further, yea completely changed, God's glory then requires his trust in the divine mercy, through the satisfaction of Christ, for acceptance and salvation in death as well as in life : for though the last act of the mind may not be an act of faith, yet generally God's people are looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. *Jude* 21. Thus the divine perfections in harmony with mercy are glorified by the believer, both living and dying ; for he assures himself that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God to be eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, *Rom.* vi. 23. And therefore expects to receive it as such.

C H A P. XXVIII.

MERCY TRIUMPHANT IN THE RESURRECTION
OF THE SAINTS.

1 Cor. xv. 26. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

THE great object of the slavish fear of believers is death. Though this enemy sorely tries their confidence, yet mercy in the end renders their faith victorious. Indeed the Lord bestows on some of his people much comfort and joy in their dying moments, but then this is not the common lot of his heritage. However death in reference to all may with propriety be placed in the class of conquered foes, since it ushers the soul into eternal life, instead of putting it into the hands of divine vengeance. In this the abridgment of its dominion appears, but inasmuch as it still holds the body captive, it is not wholly deprived of it. That it shall be is demonstratively evident from the resurrection of Christ, who is the Redeemer not only of the souls, but also of the bodies of his heritage. He being their head, and they his members, proves it beyond doubt.— Nay it is obvious from the rule of divine justice, both

both in rewards and punishments ; as also from many tokens given thereof both in the Old and New Testament. The body being originally immortal, and our whole nature in Christ already glorified, render the same certain, for both soul and body in one person, is by faith a member of Christ's mystical body : nay in that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, affords us the most irrefragable proof of their resurrection. The bodies of the saints are raised by virtue of Christ's merits, as appears from *Hosea* xiii. 14. 1 *Cor.* xv. 25. and divers other places; but not so the wicked, rather by his divine power only, that both body and soul which have sinned, may receive the wages of their iniquity. The efficient cause of the resurrection is the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit ; but the Son not in his divine nature only, as is obvious from *Rom.* xiv. 9. but in his human also. The bodies of men raised will be the identical bodies, from which their souls departed at death ; for it would not be meet that other bodies which were neither the subjects of moral good or evil, should be exalted or punished. Job confirms this truth, chap. xix. 25,—27. “ I know (says he) that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall

behold and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me." But Paul speaks more full to the purpose, 2 Cor. v. 10. " For we must all appear before the judgment-feat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." If any one be still in doubt touching the sameness of the bodies, which shall be raised, let such consider the omniscience and omnipotence of God. A proper reflection on which will be sufficient to answer every objection on this point.— But to prevent improper ideas respecting the identity here asserted, I would quote the observation of a certain Author on this subject.— " We may rise
 " (says he) with the same bodies which we have here,
 " notwithstanding any change or flux of the parts
 " of our bodies while we live, or any accident af-
 " ter death. It is agreeable to reason, and to
 " the observations of philosophers and physicians,
 " to believe that the bones and muscles, the ten-
 " dons and nerves, and all the essential and consti-
 " tuent parts of human bodies, are of so firm
 " and solid a substance, as to suffer little alteration
 " during our lives, when once they are come to
 " their full growth and proportion, but to conti-
 " nue the same 'till we die ; and the alterations
 " which they undergo before men come to their
 " full stature, is by addition of parts, not by
 " the diminution of those wherewith we are born.

" It

“ It appears from a late discourse of a learned physician, that nutrition is a supply of the fluid parts, and that the proper substance of the solid parts suffers no diminution, but in some extraordinary cases, and therefore can stand in no need of reparation but in such a case. For the whole body is vascular, or made up of vessels and pipes replenished with their several substances, so that in an atrophy the fibres become dry, and the nerves and vessels are contracted and shrunk, for want of the spirits and juices and liquors, which before filled and distended them. But the solid parts are of so durable a substance that they can suffer no diminution, but by such corrosives to dissolve them as must produce ulcers, and such as would affect the fibres with so intolerable pains, that the tortments of the stone and gout would be moderate and easy to them, which in a consumption would be universal in all parts of the body; whereas there is no such symptom in any part, and in the greatest consumptions the bones are found to retain their bigness ; though a piece of bone is sooner dissolved by a corrosive liquor such as aquafortis, than muscular fibres of equal quantity and weight. It is wont to be observed upon this subject that when the change of parts is gradual, and in the course of some years, the body may be still the same, as it could

" could not be if the change were made all at
 " once. A ship or house remains the same
 " though it be never so often repaired, and
 " though the materials in succession of time be all
 " or most of them renewed ; whereas if it should
 " be taken to pieces all at once, and all the mate-
 " rials should be changed, and new materials
 " of the same figure and dimensions should be
 " exactly in the same manner framed and built
 " up together in their stead, these would make
 " another house or ship, and not the same that
 " was before. But when the parts which consti-
 " tute the human body, and give it the denom-
 " nation of the body of this or that individual
 " man, continue the same, the same person has
 " the same body in his old age that he had in his
 " youth, as truly as he has the same body in sick-
 " ness which he had in health, and the same un-
 " der the languishings of a consumption which he
 " had in his greatest vigor and strength. For the
 " change is only in the variable and accidental
 " parts, which are not necessary to constitute the
 " body of such a man ; and the necessary constitu-
 " ent parts (though they were changed or altered,
 " as in some very rare cases they may be) being
 " so few in comparison of the rest which make up
 " the bulk of a man's body, can hardly be sup-
 " posed by the devouring of cannibals, or by
 " any other accident, to become the constituent
 " parts

" parts of any other man's body. Sanctorius
 " from his Statick Experiments, has observed
 " that a very inconsiderable part of what we eat
 " is turned to nourishment, and from the small
 " proportion which the necessary constituent parts
 " bear to the rest, and the unfitness of them as
 " of bones, &c. to nourish, it may be concluded
 " that little or nothing of that which turns to nou-
 " rishment, can be supposed to be of those constitu-
 " ent parts ; and considering farther the great
 " changes which happen in our bodies in the con-
 " tinual flux of parts, and the small proportion
 " again, which the constituent or necessary essen-
 " tial parts have to the rest, we may conclude
 " (supposing those parts as well as others to suffer
 " alteration) that it is the greatest odds that the
 " constituent parts, which turn to nourishment
 " do not by that nourishment, happen to belong
 " to the constituent parts of the man's body who
 " is nourished by them, when he comes to die.—
 " So that if a man should live wholly upon human
 " flesh, which it is not to be believed that ever
 " any man did, yet it would perhaps be above an
 " hundred to one whether any constituent part of
 " his body were made up when he died, of the
 " constituent parts of any other man's body. And
 " besides it must be granted by all that believe a God
 " and a Providence, that a particular Providence
 " may take such effectual care of us, as to reserve

" to

“ to every man his own body in all the essential parts of it. The hairs of our heads are all numbered, that is, they are as well known to God as they could be to us, if we had told and numbered them ever so exactly ; and therefore much more the necessary parts of us are under his cognizance and care.” Jenkins’s Cert. of the Christian Religion, vol. ii. pages 448, 449, 450.

Thus the bodies both of the righteous and the wicked, will at the resurrection have the same organical parts they had here, without which they would not be the same bodies. The circumstance which will attend the resurrection of the just is, that they shall rise not with the same kind of body, that they laid down at death ; no, but on the contrary glorious and spiritual. *1 Cor. xv. 44. It is sown a natural body, (says the apostle) it is raised a spiritual body.* Besides, not as in this life subject to diseases, infirmities, and accidents, lifeless, and impotent ; but instead thereof immortal, glorious, powerful, and agile, as the preceding verses evince, viz. the 42, 43. for thus is their language. *So also is the resurrection of the dead ; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.* To which add Christ’s declaration, *Matt. xiii. 43. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.* Now as the dead in Christ shall be thus raised, so all the

the living which believe in him shall be thus changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *1 Cor. xv. 51.* and shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. *1 Thes. iv. 17.* Thus at last are the redeemed of the Lord both in soul and body, to the glory of rich mercy completely delivered from sin and from death. Its unavoidable concomitant raised to a more glorious estate, than was enjoyed before Adam fell ; all this effected to the exaltation of every divine perfection, whereby even justice and holiness shine forth with peculiar splendor. Thus the divine Father is glorified as the God of mercy, the divine Son in the great work of redemption which he had effected, wherein alone mercy could be displayed, and whereby it could only be communicated, and finally the Spirit of the Lord is honored, as a spirit of power, by rendering the salvation efficacious and complete, in, and upon the objects of divine mercy.

C H A P. XXIX.

THE GLORIFICATION OF MERCY IN THE
FINAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE ELECT.

*2 Tim. i. 18. The Lord grant unto him, that he may
find mercy of the Lord in that day.*

THIS prayer of Paul for Onesiphorous, who as he tells us in the preceding verses, had refreshed him and was not ashamed of his chain, notwithstanding all they which were of Asia turned away from him, but sought him out diligently when at Rome and found him ; I say, this prayer does not suppose that the Lord suspends all judgment upon men after death until that last and solemn day of judgment which he hath appointed, but rather proves that that judgment will consist in an open declaration before men and angels, who were and who were not the subjects of justifying mercy in time. For the purport of the apostle's petition was, that this friend who had been so kind unto him, might then appear to be of the happy number whom the Lord here justifies by grace. Justification in the day of judgment evidently supposes and plainly evinces that the gospel and mercy, and not strict justice only, will be the rule of the divine procedure ; for should it

it then be enquired who were and who were not in time perfect in themselves, there could not possibly be any such thing as justification in that solemn day of account ; nevertheless the works of those who shall then be justified, must prove that they were perfect whilst on earth in Christ their head. Condemnation on the contrary will then be according to divine justice without the least mixture of mercy ; for those who shall then be condemned will appear to have been not of his sheep. " And I saw (says John the Divine) the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened ; and another book was opened which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works," *Rev. xx. 12.* Hence it appears all will be judged.

First, According to the book of God's eternal decrees of love and grace, which is the book of life ; and those who are found therein will be judged according to the gracious effects of justifying mercy. But

Secondly, They whose names are not written in it will be judged by the book of God's divine omniscience, the book of conscience, the book of nature, and that of revelation comprehending law and gospel, agreeable to their various circumstances and privileges in life, but every individual of

them according to his works. The works of the saints will be brought forth as proofs of God's special love and grace. And the dead works of sinners declared as so many evidences of their graceless state, and they themselves be sentenced according to the demerit of their sins, whether mental or external. The present design being to shew the glorification of mercy, and not God's vindictive justice at this awful period, the latter therefore we dismiss. The truth, goodness, and immutability of God, as well as the fearfulness of conscience, shew the certainty of a day of judgment, the efficient cause of which is the sacred Trinity.— Hence it is said, *Deut. xxxii. 36. The Lord shall judge his people.* With which we may compare *Psalm ix. 8. I. 6.* Sometimes it is attributed to the divine Father, as in *Dan. vii. 9, 10.* “ I beheld (says he) 'till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool : his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. And a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.— The judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Compare this with *John viii. 50.* and *Acts xvii. 31.* Sometimes it is attributed to the Holy Spirit, see *Isai. iv. 4.* and *Gen. vi. 3.* compared with *John xvi. 8.* But the sacred person then appearing as judge,

judge will undoubtedly be Christ as God-man, who will then declare his divine omnipresence by revealing the hidden thoughts of the heart ; discover his omniscience and convince all of his consummate wisdom, justice, and power ; who according to Paul, *2 Thes.* i. 7, 8. shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire. At whose approach the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up, *2 Pet.* iii. 10. Though this will be a day of inexpressible terror and astonishment to the wicked, *Nah.* i. 6. *2 Thes.* i. 8. yet of unutterable joy to God's people. The saints shall not stand before the judge doubtful of his important appointment : no, neither will he to their shame and disgrace declare before an assembled world their sins and transgressions, for our Lord in the description of that day's process mentions not their sins, but their acts of love, *Matt.* xxv. Nay the promise of free pardon and the divine immutability appear inconsistent therewith, as well as the affection of the judge towards them, who being their redeemer, favor, and advocate, will then bestow upon them a crown of righteousness. Wherefore all the doubtfulness which can then attend the redeemed, will be what seat in bliss may be appointed them, and not a hanging in suspense whether bliss or misery shall be

their portion. They shall be judged by their works, and this in order to evidence

First, The truth of their grace in time.

Secondly, The strength of it.

First, **To** evince the truth of their grace. This certainly the apostle James alludes to, chap. ii. 18. *Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* If this then be the case now, if no man can know the truth of another man's faith but by his external conduct, how at the last day should the truth of faith appear, but by the fruit thereof exemplified in the external conduct? Few saints there are but in some external instance or other evidence to the penetrating observer, the grace which hath been bestowed upon them. Now God and angels are privy to what men are ignorant of; all which shall then be revealed, nay the secrets of every heart shall be discovered at that awful period: and therefore not only the external but internal fruits of faith will be displayed and declared by the omniscient judge. As the works themselves of God's people will be then produced, only as so many testimonies that they were indeed in time, the subjects of God's free mercy, that they were justified freely through the redemption of Christ, and that they

were

were sanctified by his grace, the attribute of mercy will thereby be eminently glorified. 'Tis true the Lord will reward their work of faith and labor of love, but then it will be a reward only of grace ; because were their goodness to be tried by that rule by which wicked men will be judged, instead of deserving a smile they would merit a frown. *Matt. xxv. 30,—40.* As the Lord will judge the evil thoughts, words, and actions of the wicked, so will he reveal the secret inclinations, thoughts, desires and breathings of his people, which his own spirit produced in their hearts, against sin, satan, and the world ; and this he will do that it may appear they were vessels of mercy, nay all their groanings under the presence and power of their spiritual adversaries, and make it evident to the whole intelligent creation, that they were justified and sanctified in time ; which methinks will be then necessary to evidence the works good of those who made a profession of faith, and to shew that this grace was real in them who possessed it, yet had no opportunity to make a profession thereof. What consolation do these things administer to the humble and tempted christian !—Reader ! If thou art one of that number I would fain say to thee, what though thou art now despised by the world, slighted perhaps by God's people, to thine apprehensions rejected by God, and thy hope almost ready to expire, yet the

the Lord will then interpret all the hidden workings of his own grace in thy heart, and shew how dear and precious thou wert in his sight.

Secondly, The Lord's people will be judged according to the purity and strength of their faith. In proportion to grace and faith here, methinks such will glory be hereafter: therefore the nature and number of their works will be searched into. The truth of grace insures their happiness, but the measure of grace constitutes the degree thereof. The more evangelical therefore our works have been in time the greater the opposition; and the more we have abounded in such works upon every providential occasion, it is highly probable that in proportion thereto so will be our state of glory. Some christians are quite legal and selfish in comparison of others; they may abound more in moral duties but with little purity, with very little love to God, but on the contrary with much love unto themselves, for the principle, motive and end are essential to a good work. The more of faith the more true love, and consequently the more the glory of God will be simply aimed at. Whilst then we are solicitous to abound in holy duties and works of charity, let us examine how well they deserve these characters. Some think the glory of saints in an heavenly state will be exactly alike. This seems to be an opinion inconsistent with many portions of sacred scripture, as 2 Cor.

ix. 9. where it is thus said : *He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.* Again. 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* Similar passages to which might also be quoted ; but as every saint is what he is in this state, through the mercy of God alone by Christ Jesus, the different degrees of glory in another state must therefore be solely attributed to the sovereignty of divine grace, and not in the least to the creature. 1 Cor. iv. 7. *For who maketh thee to differ from another ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it ?*

C H A P. XXX.

THE FINAL GLORIFICATION OF MERCY.

Micah vi. 20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

THOUGH the mercy here promised principally intends that mercy of mercies, even the Lord Jesus Christ, yet in it is contained not only grace but also glory ; because Christ is a greater gift than even heaven itself, for the gift of him not only ensures an entrance into glory, but likewise all those unknown blessings which God will bestow even to eternity. Hence it is said, *John i. 4. In him was life* ; and he speaking of himself says, *John xiv. 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life.* And hence also Paul puts this notable question, viz. *Rom. viii. 32. How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Plainly indicating the superior worth and excellency of Christ to every thing that can be named. Therefore

Eternal life bestowed on sinful man as it is the accomplishment of mercy, so also as an effect points out its cause, it is the final glorification of mercy.

mercy, in and upon those who were truly the subjects of misery. Hence mercy is built up for ever and the faithfulness of God established : *Psalm lxxxix. 2.* for what can be a stronger proof thereof than to behold those who were condemned to eternal torments, seated on the pinnacle of blessedness ; and to find enemies to God become as perfect in their nature as angels in bliss ? Is not in this mercy displayed in all its astonishing magnificence and excellency ? And do not justice and holiness with exultation rejoice in the omnipotent change ? Certainly they do ; yea therein the wisdom, power, truth, and faithfulness of Jehovah shine forth with renewed splendor. Here we see the excellency of a promising God, also his glory as the God of providence, who through a series of innumerable seeming contrarieties, hath at last brought his people to the full experience of what as a God of mercy he spoke unto them of.— As then their celestial blessedness glorifies the divine Father, so also doth it the God-man Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ ; because it is an experimental proof that all the divine perfections harmonized in his glorious mediation. Paul speaking of the day of judgment says, *2 Thes. i. 10.* *When he (viz. Christ) shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* O what shining testimonies will they then be of the eternity, immensity, infinity, and co-equality of

Christ with the Father in his divine nature ! Surely a person of less dignity could not have made way for such bliss to be conferred on creatures so miserable and wretched as they were ! And how wonderfully will the spirit of all grace and mercy be then also glorified, who by his omnipotent agency will then appear to have brought about this amazing and most illustrious event ! Nay the Lord Jesus Christ in all his characters, and in the whole of his gracious reign and government, will be then magnified and exalted to eternity. To observe the different acceptations of the phrase eternal life we shall omit, as not suitable to our present purpose, but only consider it as expressive of the most glorious and happy state of existence, even that which the saints shall enjoy with God and the blessed angels after the resurrection. The place of this supreme joy is called heaven ; the beauty and excellency whereof we can but very faintly apprehend, after the utmost stretch of thought aided by revelation : however the farther our ideas thereof differ from those which are gross, sensual, and carnal, the more just they are. Nay the description that holy writ doth give concerning it is only to be considered as figurative, and not as if heaven were like to things of an earthly sort. As a state, it hath various epithets, as peace, joy, salvation, adoption, an inheritance ; and by way of eminency,

uency, life itself is also glory, a crown, and a kingdom : for if Christ be an eternal king it is meet his subjects should live for ever. As a state and a place it is called a city, a house, a mansion, a dwelling place, a granary, a harvest, and divers other things, and sometimes Jerusalem and Paradise. The principal and efficient cause of our entrance therein is the free grace and mercy of God ; the meritorious cause, the satisfaction of Christ, as we could not have expected it unless he had redeemed us out of the hands of justice ; and finally the instrumental cause thereof is faith in him. To say fully in what eternal life consists is beyond human ability, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Yet we know that it will consist in a freedom from all evil, and an enjoyment of all good. The greatest evil we can labor under, next to the displeasure of God, is a nature inclining us to sin ; which in scripture is called the old man, the law of sin, the body of death ; from the reign of which believers are delivered even here, but in that state and place of blessedness, they shall be absolutely delivered from the in-being of it. Satan then with his temptations shall no more annoy them, neither shall they be subject to the allurements and frowns of this world, for the wicked will be everlastingly separated

rated from them, and the globe itself no longer subsist as it did in time. As then this glorious state will include a perfect freedom from sin and all temptations to it, so it will consist in an absolute exclusion of all pain, trouble and affliction, for God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of those who are thus blessed, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. *Rev. xxi. 4.* Thus it appears that all evils relative to body and mind shall be for ever shut out and never more take place on those whom mercy will thus exalt. But positively eternal life will consist

First, In the beatific vision of God. This appears from *Psalm xvii. 15. Matt. v. 8.* and various parts of scripture. By the phrase vision of God sometimes is understood that knowledge of his being and existence, which is implanted in the nature of every rational creature. Sometimes that which is acquired by an investigation of the works of nature ; nay some understand thereby the knowledge communicated to the prophets in the various modes of revelation. The vision of God which believers enjoy on earth is such a knowledge, that as it differs from those kinds thereof before-mentioned, so also it far exceeds them all in worth and excellency, because it is of a saving

a saving nature. But the beatific vision of which we now treat is still something more glorious, for though it be not a comprehensive vision after that sort which is peculiar to God alone, and incom-
municable to men and angels: yet according to some, it will be such a conception or apprehension which arises from intuition, and proportionate to a finite mind. Doctor Guyse paraphrasing on *1 Cor.* xiii. 12. says, “ Yet my way of knowing “ him and all heavenly objects, will be by a sort “ of immediate inspection, resembling that with “ which both he and the holy angels now know “ me.” But more particularly. Not such a vision as implies an adequate knowledge, says St. Augustin, Book 12, of his *City of God*, chap. 18. In which sense the blessed who partake of eternal life do not conceive of God, because he being infinite is infinitely to be known; but they so conceive of him as to constitute that measure of felicity, that God has appointed them. This will be the source of their bliss, for their sight of him will be attended with the most ineffable gladness and exultation, as the most exhilarating conception of the divine favor will be conjoined therewith. The beatitude of the soul will be a perfect knowledge of God and divine mysteries, *1 Cor.* xiii. 9. joined with a perfect sanctity of will, *1 Thes.* v. 23. and a perfect love of God and our neighbour, which will be the immediate fruit of this glorious

and

and beatific vision. To this purpose St. John speaks, 1 *John* iii. 2. " Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." As for the body it will be spiritual, immortal, and incorruptible, impassible, bright and excellent.— Wherefore our Lord saith, *Matt.* xiii. 43. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* Wherefore subject to no imperfection; but on the contrary beautiful, agile, and subtil. From these very imperfect observations, touching the celestial state of the saints in body and mind, we may form some faint idea of their internal blessedness. Their external we may suppose will comprehend the sweetest fellowship with God and Christ, angels and one another; yea, with the whole family of the blessed. Hence will arise mutual love, honor and joy; yea, the most ravishing delight. Their bliss will not only be extensive, and that as to variety, continuity, and eternity; but also it will be intensive as to degree, but to what degree who can say? However it will be exceeding sweet and excellent, from the description thereof given in God's word; from the blessed re-union of soul and body, the continuance of felicity, the accumulation of good; and also from the sweeteness of the prelibations afforded here; for the very consciousness of their perfection,

fection, and their assured persuasion of the certainty of its eternal duration, will elevate their joy to the highest pitch. It hath been a doubt with some whether God is seen as he is, by any creature whatever. They suppose the divine essence invisible, and therefore conclude that the only sight of God in heaven is through the medium of Christ's human nature. Others have thought different, and have asserted that the beatific vision consists in such a sight thereof as we have before pointed out ; and prove their assertion from various passages of scripture, such as *Job* xix. 26. *Psalm* xvi. 11. xvii. 15. xlii. 2. *Isai.* lxvi. 18. *Matt.* v. 8. *1 Cor.* xiii. 12. *2 Cor.* v. 7. *Heb.* xii. 14. *Rev.* xxii. 3, 4. as also from what is spoken of, concerning the angels in glory. The case alluded to in reference to them appears much to the purpose ; for our Lord saith, *Matt.* xviii. 10. “ Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” Now whatever is intended hereby we are sure that glorified saints do, and will enjoy the like blessing, because scripture itself teacheth us clearly that the members of Christ's mystical body shall participate of their felicity. Persons there have been also and still are, who have doubted whether one saint will differ in degree from another in glory, imagining the thief who was crucified

cified with Christ, and saved just before he expired, to be as highly exalted in glory as Abraham, Moses, David, or Paul. This sentiment is not only contrary to the general opinion of mankind, but methinks differs much from the sacred oracles of truth: as for example, *Dan.* xii. 3. *Matt.* xxv. 21. Nay, it is quite inconsistent with the promised retribution of works, in a way of grace, *Rev.* xxii. 22. 2 *Cor.* ix. 6. 1 *Cor.* iii. 8. And moreover differs widely from the circumstances of elect angels in glory, and the case of the wicked in hell, for we are informed by truth itself that amongst the one there are different degrees of glory, and amongst the other different degrees of torment and misery. Besides who will say that such a sentiment as this is no discouragement from a patient attention to, and study of the will of God? Again. It hath been asked by some, will the bliss of saints in glory be an act, or an habit? Answer. As the beatific vision is held forth in scripture to be the source of all their blessedness, the former seems more probable than the latter: 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12. 1 *John* iii. 2. because the nature thereof is the enjoyment of the chief good, and that enjoyment continual and uninterrupted. It hath been questioned also, whether saints in that happy state will know one another. To answer which seems not very difficult, for Adam knew Eve, whom he never before saw, Peter, Moses

Moses and Elias, when he was with our Lord on the mount of transfiguration. *Matt. xvii. 3.* Nay to suppose any in glory will be unacquainted with those who as instruments, have been of more or less benefit to the church as a body, appears weak and futile ; for even a perfection of love infers the necessity of knowledge. If there be in heaven a perfect society, certainly there is a mutual knowledge ; and that it shall be still so when their bliss is complete both in body and soul is beyond a doubt ; but the mark or character by which they will be known each to the other, hath been supposed to be the degree of glory conferred upon, and peculiar to each individual of them ; however this we must look on as supposition only. One remark more I have to make and shall then conclude, which is, that it is the opinion of many that the faculties of saints in glory will be progressively enlarged to eternity, so as to contain more and more glory. To this purpose Doctor Young seems to express himself in the following line :

“ What wealth (says he) in faculties of endless
“ growth ! ” Night Thoughts, p. 117.

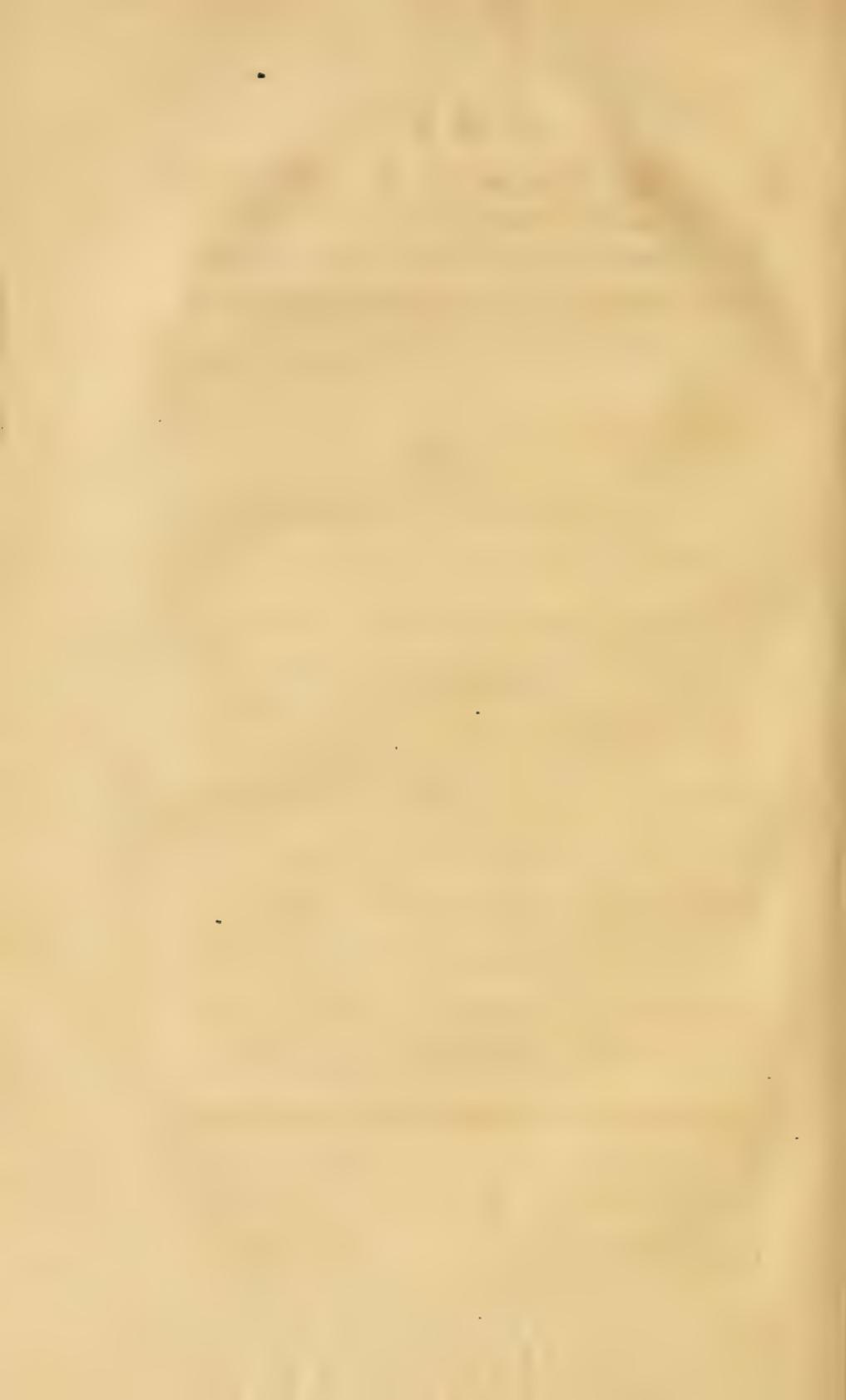
However this may be, we are sure that every saint on his first entrance into glory, is as happy as he can desire ; and also when the spirits of just men made perfect are re-united to their bodies, they will be capable of a much larger measure of felicity

than before ; yet what the Lord will do, whether he will or will not enlarge the respective capacities of his saints, in that state as before observed, is not for us to determine, unless we had his word to authorize our determination. What concerns us is properly to reflect on, and duly to improve this most glorious subject ; how to consider it we have pointed out in the beginning of this chapter. But how to improve it, let us not only reflect on it, but do so with application. If we are still in a state of sin, a due improvement hereof cannot be obtained without an unfeigned concern to be acquainted with our guilt and misery, in order that we may see what danger we are in of being everlastinglly consigned over to that state and place, which is just the reverse to what we have now considered. A sinner alarmed though still a sinner is more likely to think of heaven, and the way thither, than an hardened sinner, because the spirit of the Lord first convinces whom he converts, though he does not always convert whom he convinces. Now to be truly solicitous to know and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, by a true and living faith, (which none but a convinced sinner will do) to increase and grow in such a faith is certainly to improve this subject, not only to our own advantage, but also to the honor and glory of the divine perfections. Wherefore O believer ! Be concerned to get more of the life of God

God in thy soul. Study more the freeness, fullness, and perpetuity of the divine love and grace. Be not contented to hear of the things of God and Christ and the salvation of his people, but be concerned to partake of them, nay to be the subject of their blessedness. Meditate much on the cardinal points of divinity, as faith and love : these comprehend all other graces, and are the source of every good word and work. The first, by depending on the Lord for favor and strength, invigorates the latter the offspring thereof, to live unto God's glory. Thy love if true will be always in proportion to thy faith. Therefore if thou wouldest increase in love, thou must increase in faith, and in this way only seek to increase in every other grace. Art thou desirous to enjoy greater and clearer evidences of interest in the salvation of God's people, and that thy conversation may be more becoming the gospel of Christ ? Surely this is the only mean to obtain so glorious and desirable an end ; for the more life, the more action. These observations will suit the weak and the strong, the afflicted and the joyful. Yea, be thy case whatsoever it may, through Christ the way of the Lord's appointment, thou hast encouragement to hope for the heavenly inheritance ; for though thou mayest be ever so low and mean in thine own esteem, thou hast a perfect latitude of

of hope in the gospel, not only to be scarcely saved, but that an abundant entrance may be administered unto thee, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, *2 Pet. i. 11.* which I pray may be the happy case both of thee and me. Amen.

The E N D.



A N
E N Q U I R Y
I N T O
The USE and OFFICE
O F
The M O R A L L A W,

As in the Hand of the DIVINE SPIRIT:

TOGETHER WITH

The Nature, Publication, and Instrumentality

O F

The G O S P E L C A L L,

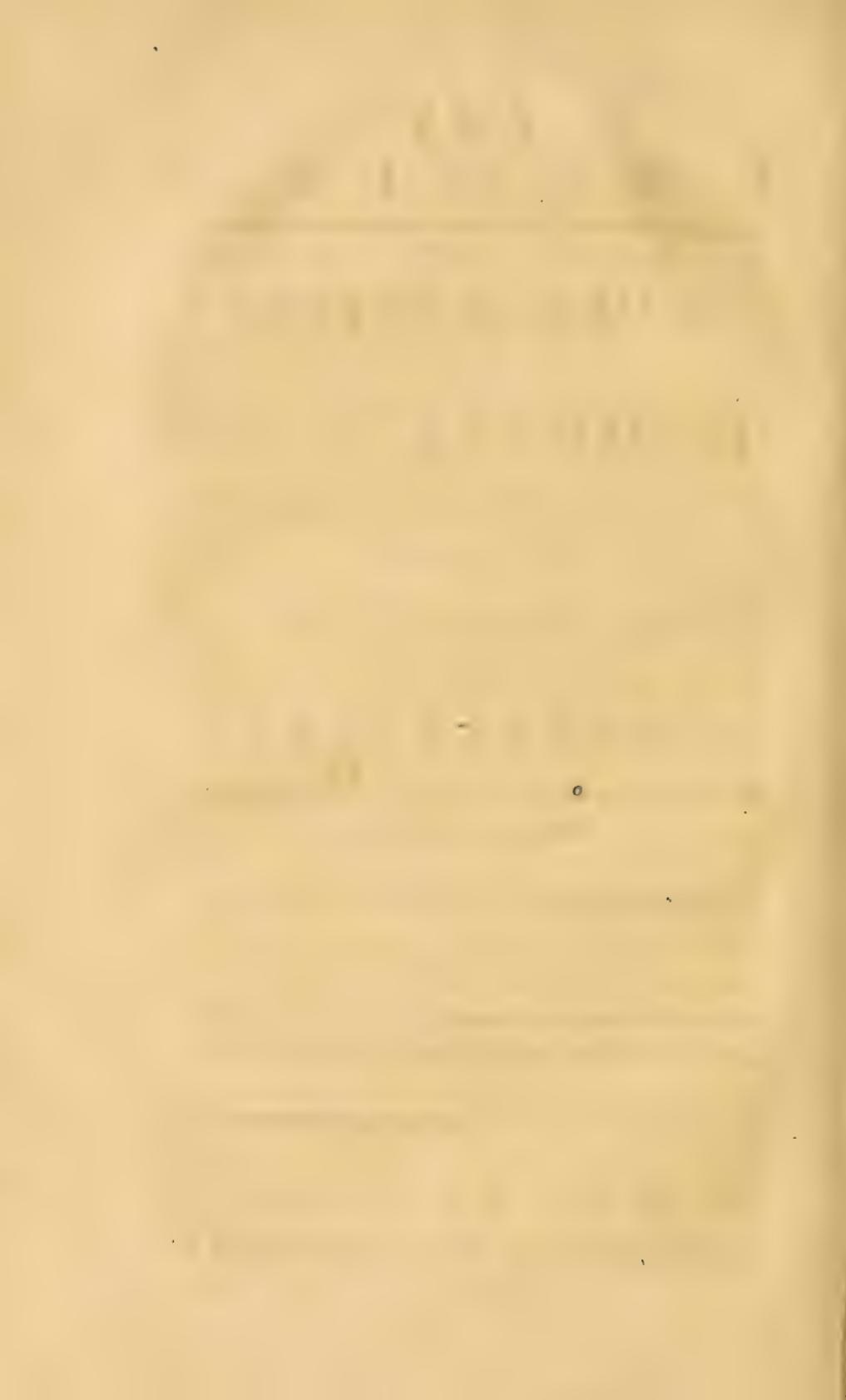
Through the same DIVINE AGENT, in the effectual
Calling of SINNERS.

2 COR. iii. 9.

*For if the Ministration of Condemnation be Glory, much more
doth the Ministration of Righteousness exceed in Glory.*

B R I S T O L:

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MDCCLXXXV.



P R E F A C E.

THROUGH the dealings of Providence being intrusted with more time from secular affairs than some years past, I pondered with myself (after earnest prayer to God) how I should best employ it to his glory; after waiting several months for divine direction, the subject of the following pages occurred to my mind with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction; whence I was prompted to take my pen in hand in search of its importance and sweetness: no subject all will allow can be more interesting than the glorious means of everlasting salvation, neither should any be treated with more caution and under a deeper sense of all human insufficiency unassisted from above. Whoever shall peruse the ensuing inquiry is requested first to consider the eternity and immutability of Jehovah, and to see to it he be well assured, that his thoughts of God correspond with what he hath revealed, touching his own nature and existence, ere he condemn what is therein contained. The candid reader is hereby desired not to censure too hastily, if the manner thereof appear novel; neither to conclude, that what is therein advanced is set forth without human precedent. The entire insufficiency of the law to sanctify the heart of fallen man in the least degree, hath been maintained by

many both eminently great and good, as Martin Luther, that great reformer of Europe from Popery: the great Cameron, who was at the head of the Reformation in France, whose assertions on this matter are quoted in the ensuing work; as also by H. Zanchy, vol. 4, cap. 5. Dr. Owen in his Treatise of Justification, chap. 18, and many others. This being premised and acknowledged, the candid must allow the call of the gospel to be universal and indefinite (a point not rashly to be condemned, and which is principally regarded in the following attempt) consequently to be free from all conditions and pre-requisites: that many divines of unblemished character have asserted as much, need not be proved; who have also declared that even repentance is no condition to embrace this call, but rather repentance unto life of which the scripture speaketh is the fruit of the gospel embraced.— The reader it is hoped will not suppose that the following observations are calculated to discountenance the use of the moral law in order to conversion: if this had been the case, so much had not been said on that head; but rather to manifest it to be exceeding useful in shewing mankind as in a glass their guilt and misery, not to qualify and make them meet for the gospel, but to prompt them to embrace it through a consciousness of their necessity and danger. It may be asked if these things have been handled by so many, what need of publishing more? To the person so questioning let it be replied, that though the things maintained in the ensuing treatise have been affirmed repeatedly by authors of no small credit, yet have

they been particularly treated but by few. It is observed M. Culverwell labored as much as any man to set forth the gospel call or warrant in a true light, but I suppose his Treatise thereon can at present be scarcely procured; having myself endeavored to obtain a sight thereof, but to no purpose. Wherefore as the particulars following, though allowed and inculcated, have been for the most part rather hinted at than explained and proved, I thought the following performance (mean and indifferent as it is) might be of some use, considering what proneness is in every man when awakened, to seek for some qualification, whereby he may be entitled to embrace Christ and his salvation; and what aptitude there is in the hearts of the Lord's people to stand at a distance from the Savior, until they can find some encouragement within them to draw near. To conclude. If thou, whoever thou art, that readest the succeeding lines be but truly concerned to know thyself, solicitous to be acquainted with the Prince of life and glory, and to know him in an especial and saving manner, thou then wilt be engaged in sincere and hearty prayer to the Lord, that thou mayest be guided into all truth, preserved from every error, and wilt not condemn what thou readest, unless thou canst warrantably disprove it: but on the contrary if thou shouldst be one who art well acquainted with thyself and the Lord, I trust thou wilt be led to confess, that what is therein contained is agreeable to the sacred oracles; and be still desirous to grow daily in an experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. That this may be thy happy case is the sincere desire of

The A U T H O R.

The INTRODUCTION.

Rom. i. 5, 6. By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.

IF we are induced to make an industrious enquiry into the nature of the means conducive to any particular, valuable, and important end, it must be necessarily concluded that persons so inclined have at least some apprehensions of that end ; and though it may not amount to a perspicuous perception of the nature and excellence thereof, yet at least to a striking apprehension that it is both interesting and important. As the subject of the ensuing enquiry is not so much the calling treated of in the above quoted passage out of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, as of the means leading thereto ; yet it will be necessary to observe, that the calling he therein treats of is not a calling to any particular office either in church or state, as expressed in the 1 Cor. vii. 20, “ Let every man abide in the same calling, &c.” neither is it the gospel, or ministerial call only, for respecting

respecting persons so called, it is said, *Matt. xx. 16, Many be called, but few chosen*; but it is rather

I. A saving apprehension of Christ by faith, through the effectual operation of the divine Spirit. And

II. The indwelling of the same divine agent, mortifying and crucifying the old man with his deeds; and raising the soul to a spiritual and heavenly life, which is begun through the saving apprehension of Christ (as before observed) and will at last be perfected in glory.

This end being so glorious, and replete with excellence, before we enter upon our inquiry, let us consider what is man's state, as he is now introduced upon the present stage of existence.— What his inclination, aims, and desires; and whether he be naturally inclined to such aspirations as are demonstrative of this calling? Methinks I may safely say, not so; but rather very far from it.

For man as he is born into the world is under condemnation, even of him who is his creator, maintainer, and preserver; and consequently before one actual sin is committed, may be righteously configned over to eternal death: that this is not a rash assertion may be proved from what the great apostle of the Gentiles affirms, not only of the believing Ephesians, but of himself and his

brethren

brethren the apostles, declaring they were all by nature the children of wrath, (that is) as they came into the world (according to the appointment of God) by natural generation ; the cause of which awful state the same apostle shews in *Rom.* v. 12. " Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, (or as in the margin of the Bible) in whom all have sinned :" evidently establishing this grand point of doctrine, that every son and daughter of Adam is considered by the eternal Jehovah as much guilty of this first transgression, as if each individual had really then existed, stood in covenant with God for himself only, and transgressed as Adam did. This the human heart is very disinclinal to believe, and militates much against ; yet certainly it is both the privilege and duty of every regenerated son and daughter of Adam firmly to credit and maintain, as the whole doctrine of redemption depends thereon ; and to be assured thereof, because the lip of truth hath revealed it ; considering it not as a matter of experience, but of faith. Surely to be condemned by God as soon as we exist, to be then exposed to the curse of his law, and liable continually through our whole life to the everlasting displeasure of him, who created, and who alone maintains and preserves us, is an alarming consideration ; seeing,

ing, when he please, he may cease so to do, the consequence whereof, unless interested in his favor through the merits of Christ, must be everlasting destruction.

Respecting the pollution of our inclinations, aims and desires, let us hear what the psalmist David saith, *Psalm li. 5, Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*, which words by the apostle in the afore-cited passage to the Romans, may be considered as explained by the following clause, “ and death by sin,” pointing out a spiritual death, or such a total depravation of the powers of the soul of man, that instead of being engaged for God are engaged against him; this is plain by comparing the said passage with *Ephes. ii. 1, and 5.* Certainly if this be the case of mankind in general, if they be not only condemned for their first offence in Adam, but in consequence thereof coming into the world are wholly dead to God, (that is) in all their powers and faculties disinclined from him, and inclined to sin, and are thereby rendered liable to a greater condemnation; if this be the case it may well account for their practical offences, and shew how it is they are so easily led away by the grand adversary of souls on every temptation; and clearly manifest that as the alienation of mankind from God took place in their first federal head, that this alienation must be continually increasing by their prac-

tical iniquities, (being the corrupt streams which flow from that polluted fountain they derive from him) and consequently thereby accumulate to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

The above reflection on man's state by nature, naturally serves to introduce the following inquiry, viz. Whether the law of God though in the hand of the Spirit, entirely exclusive of the gospel, can instate a man again into the divine favor, and confer upon him such power, as to make his services in any measure acceptable? To prove its insufficiency,

I. It must be observed that the law (that is, the moral law) of itself hath lost its power to convince the conscience.

II. That it is only efficacious to this end, but as in the hand of the divine Spirit.

III. That when so administered, it is only for condemnation and not calculated to justify.

First, It is to be observed, that the law hath lost its power, through the fall, of itself to convict the conscience. This will appear if we consult *Exodus* vii. 3, and 10th. "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs, and my wonders in the land of Egypt. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he hearkened not unto them." It is not to be supposed without blasphemy, that the

Lord

Lord (through any divine operation) wrought such an effect upon him ; but withholding his influence, those means which in themselves were materially sufficient became useless to convince him of the majesty, power, dominion and sovereignty of the Lord, by whose power the miracles wrought were effected, and how meet it was he should obey his voice in letting his people go : therefore all hardness of heart is the consequence of the Lord the Spirit ceasing to operate, by his own appointed means of conviction and terror, to keep back the children of men from evil, or to alarm their consciences when the same hath been perpetrated ; which is no injustice done inasmuch as the greatest obduracy is nothing more than the fruit and effect of our apostacy from God in our first covenant head, but generally is permitted in proportion to the atrociousness and permanency of practical offence : for confirmation hereof see 1 Sam. ii. 25, *Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.* Of this sentiment was that excellent divine Mr. William Perkins, as may be seen in his first vol. p. 722. "The Lord faith of Pharaoh, I will harden his heart ; and this he is said to do, not because he sets and imprints hardness in his heart, but because by fundry actions he orders and governs his wicked will, and they are four.—First he permits Pharaoh to his own will. Secondly

" he

“ he leaves him to the malice of the devil, and
 “ the lusts of his own heart. Thirdly he urges
 “ him with a commandment to let the people go.
 “ Lastly God useth the hardness of Pharaoh’s
 “ heart to the manifestation of his own justice
 “ and judgment.”

Secondly, The law is only efficacious as in the hand of the divine Spirit to convince the conscience.

If this be denied how shall we account for the various dispositions of natural men with respect to sin, and as touching their moral behaviour ? It may be answered, some men are favored with a better education than others ; that they are so circumstanced in Providence ; and the rule of their duty being inculcated on them, they are excited to a greater fear and reverence of God than others, who are deprived of these privileges. If this reply be conclusive, every man’s moral conduct will necessarily be in proportion to his knowledge of the rule of his duty : but may we not say, are there not many instances where men have been called by office to a constant dispensation of God’s word, have professionally been teachers of others, and yet have manifested by far a greater obduracy than many natural men, who have not been favored with the hundredth part of the means of instruction the former have been ? This can in no wise be attributed to a disparity in natural, neither

neither in acquired abilities, as every one must own the former generally have in both respects by far the superiority. To what then can we refer it but to the divine rule and government, God by his spirit working in the consciences of all men as the sovereign of his own law, applying it with more or less efficacy according to his own all-wise and gracious designs and purposes ? Of this opinion was that excellent divine *John Cameron*, as appears by his comment on *Rom. viii. 15*, speaking of the restraint some men are under, says, “ A powerful restraint of this sort begotten “ in the mind of man (void in every respect of “ the grace of God) through a certain knowledge “ of the divine law, and of the judgments of God “ (which rest indeed upon the wicked) shining “ into his understanding by the Holy Spirit, in “ some measure keeps within bounds the violence “ of his iniquities,” But to wave human testimony let us attend to what the scriptures of truth say on this point, let us hear what the wise man declares, *Prov. xviii. 14*. *The Spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear ?* Perhaps it may be objected, this is no wise apposite ; persons guilty of flagrant iniquities, such as murder, blasphemy, and such like, will be the subjects of this bitterness of soul, and not others ; but is this always the case with the former ? If not, what is the reason ? Do they

not know these are sins against God ? If they do, why do they not fear ? The reason must be, the spirit of the Lord charges the consciences of some men with those crimes (of which they are guilty) in a very powerful and awful manner, and not in the same degree the consciences of others ; and may it not be warrantably affirmed, that the same divine agent hath an undoubted right to witness to this vicegerent within us, the guilt we have contracted by our every breach of the divine law, and the penalty on that account we are liable to ? Is not his every command and prohibition guarded by the same sanction ? Is not the law of the same almighty and divine governor broke as well by the violation of one command as another ? Is not the infinitely pure and righteous God tenacious of his honor in respect to all his injunctions ? Hath he given a dispensation to any of his creatures of the human species to disobey him with impunity ? Surely no ! How then shall we account for the innumerable daily instances of rebellion against God that every son and daughter of Adam stands charged with by the law and justice of God, and yet is almost if not altogether unconscious and insensible thereof ? Indeed we must say that stupidity, insensibility, unbelief, pride, and self-pleasing have seized us ; and that man hath such a propensity to self, the creatures around, and to a seeking happiness here below, that he is unmindful

ful of God, and his authority ; and is neither restrained by the law of God from offending his maker and preserver, or convinced of his transgressions after commission, but as the spirit of God, the Lord and giver of the law applies it, by his almighty power to the conscience. If this was the case with the heathen world in respect to natural religion, why may it not be so with mankind where God's written law is promulgated ? That the case was such with the former is evident from *Rom. i. 21.* and following verses.—“ Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own body between themselves, &c.”—And that the latter is not exempted, consult the 2d chapter of the same epistle particularly from verse the 17th to the end: nay the same apostle in his 2d epistle to the *Corinthians*, chap. iii. ver. 5. declares that, *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* Yea and the idolatries of the children of Israel, the Lord's own people,

when

when extraordinary signs and wonders were wrought among them, and the oracles of truth were continually proclaimed unto them, is no small additional proof of what is before asserted : for a further confirmation of which consult the noted *Zanchy*, vol. iv. page 99. Thesis 4th.

Thirdly, That when the law is efficaciously administered by the divine Spirit, it is only to condemnation.

Agreeably to what was before observed “ by being efficaciously administered” may be understood an administration thereof, according to the allwise ends and purposes of God, respecting the government of the world, the benefit of community, the maintenance of the church, and the conviction of his people ; all which he effects not only by working in the hearts of his chosen, but also powerfully in the conscience of the unregenerate, who may never be brought to a spiritual acquaintance with Christ : this is clear on first reflection ; for what an awful appearance would this world make without it ? What anarchy, confusion, and destruction would take place ! What would become of property, habitation, nay of cities and kingdoms, and consequently of any connection one with another ? Certainly man would find those of his own species his greatest enemies, and most to be dreaded and avoided.—

But

But to proceed. As the concerns of the future are of greater importance than those of the present state, therefore speaking of the law, we say, by its being efficaciously administered is rather intended shewing a man himself, and how he stands in the sight of God, whether approved of by him, or under his displeasure. We are to consider the subject of this illumination not under grace, but the law; by which state is understood a being obliged to an unflinching conformity to all its requirements in a way of obedience, and a full satisfaction for offences committed. To this purpose Paul speaks, *Rom. iii. 19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.*— Wherefore the administration of the divine Spirit must be considered according to the state the man is under, (for hereof alone we are now treating) the inquiry then will be, doth the Spirit of the Lord give testimony to such a man that he is in the divine favor on account of any action of his? Or is there such a rectitude in the very best thought a man so circumstanced can conceive, as will procure a testimony from him who cannot lie? In answer let it be observed, that the voice of the law in the scripture is the voice of God, and consequently of the Holy Ghost, because holy men of old spoke as they were moved by him. As the third divine person in the ever blessed Trinity is of the same incomprehensible essence with the Fa-

ther and the Son, his voice in the conscience of any human creature cannot be contrary to that of the law : attend we therefore to what the law saith, *Gal. iii. 10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* This single scripture will serve instead of many, as therein is declared that unless every son and daughter of Adam hath, doth, and ever shall yield a full satisfaction to the demands of the law of God ; the law approves not and therefore doth not acquit, but for ever precludes from all true peace of conscience, yea rather curses and condemns ; wherefore we may well conclude whoever it so treats will also be thus treated by the infinitely just and righteous Jehovah, when such a one quits his tabernacle of flesh, if before that awful period he be not brought into a new covenant state, and made a partaker of Christ : how vain therefore are the hopes of the generality of mankind ? Where is the person who doth not more or less think to please God for his doings ? One conceives if he regard only equality in his dealings, he shall do well ; another if he attend his church, the Lord will accept him, whatever his character otherwise may be ; a third who makes conscience of private prayer concludes he must be the religious man, and therefore in the divine favor, notwithstanding he may be altogether

ther uninformed that the Lord requireth to be worshipped in spirit and in truth ; the fourth aims at an universal consistency with the commands of God in his external conduct, and hesitates not to conclude that he (if any) must be the character the Lord approves, not considering that the law is spiritual, (that is) it takes not cognizance only of the outward behaviour of the children of men, but regards their hearts, requires truth in the inward parts, and expects an entire suitableness in heart and life. If this be the case what reason can be assigned for the various kinds, or rather, grounds of hope in men, who are seeking to please God by their performances ? The answer is plain, the Spirit of the Lord operates on the hearts and consciences of men with different degrees of energy, which may be counteracted by the corruption in the heart common to all, and by the temptations of satan to which the mind is subject ; which when the Lord permits may be too powerful, and encourage in a fallacious and deceptive expectation of divine favor, notwithstanding the testimony of the divine Spirit to the contrary, which is always in a greater or less degree to condemnation : this may suffice for an Introduction to the proposed enquiry, viz. what is the use and office of the moral law as in the hand of the divine Spirit ; also the nature, publication, and instrumentality of the same divine agent to the effectual calling of sinners to the grace of God ?

THE

THE USE AND OFFICE OF THE MORAL LAW,
THROUGH THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY
GHOST ON THE CONSCIENCES OF GOD'S
ELECT.

C H A P. I.

*An Inquiry into the manner of the Divine Agency
through the Law, in order to effectual Calling.*

AS the inquiry contained in the close of our introduction is two-fold, the use of the law, and the use of the gospel, let us begin with the former. And

First, Are the operations of the divine Spirit to condemnation immediately answerable to saving purposes, or are they gradual ?

Secondly, Doth that divine agent take the same method with all his elect people ?

Thirdly, What are the ends he designs in his operations through the moral law, as an instrument ?

First, Are the operations of the divine Spirit to condemnation, immediately answerable to saving purposes, or are they gradual ?

First,

First, They are not immediately answerable to saving purposes, according to the Lord's general a^{ct}ings with his people, because of the great ignorance of which the human heart is the subject, not only through the fall, but by means of multiplied practical offences: the Psalmist speaking of the wicked, *Psalm x. 4.* faith, *God is not in all his thoughts*, or as in the margin of the Bible, *All his thoughts are, there is no God.* If the very being or existence of God may be ambiguously regarded, how much more his attributes and properties? Surely to such what the apostle to the *Romans* faith, may be well applied, chap. iii. 18. *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

Secondly, The convictions of the divine Spirit are not in general at once full and comprehensive, as they might amaze and swallow up, were that the case: for as our Lord dealt with his disciples, *John xvi. 12.* *I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;* so the Lord the Spirit is pleased to deal with the soul, that he may be rationally and solidly reproved, and be capable of concluding of the propriety on what he is pleased to shew him.

Thirdly, As wicked practices are more apparent to the mind of man than evil thoughts, and the heart naturally averse to all reproof, it is by experience

rience found, that souls are first brought under conviction of the sin of those practices, which the common consent of mankind condemn as iniquitous, before they enter the chambers of imagery, or know in any degree the wickedness and vileness that is within them ; yet it is not intended hereby to deny the Lord's sovereignty, or to limit his power, seeing if he please he can cut short his work, and effectually convert the man to himself, under the same discourse by which he might be convicted ; instances of this kind are left on record for the instruction and encouragement of them who should come after : such was the case of Lydia, *Act. xvi. 14.* the jailor, *verse 16 to 21.* and the thief on the cross, *Matt. xxvii. 44.* *John xxiii.* from the 40th to the 44th verse. Notwithstanding these proofs it may be safely affirmed, that for the most part the operations of the divine Spirit are gradual. Lamentable it is, not only to reflect on the darkness that envelopes the minds of men thro' their natural depravity, but more so to consider the increase of that darkness, by means of their practical iniquities, through which (without breach of charity it may be affirmed) they are scarcely convinced they are more than brutal, and that as the brute dies possibly they may die also. It will therefore be acknowledged that they who are savingly brought to an acquaintance with the truth, as it is in Jesus, are convinced that they are immortal with respect to their

their souls, and as they are rational beings they must be accountable for the deeds done in the body, to him who gave them their existence ; judging by the creation around them that the Lord must be infinite in power, and therefore capable of rewarding, or punishing ; also unlimitedly just and righteous, as being the first cause of all things, and therefore will not wink at their transgressions : these considerations are increased by their occasional or more stated attendance on the preaching or reading of the word of God.

They consider also the preciousness of their souls, and the awfulness of that eternity to which they are hastening ; they say unto their souls, O my soul what thinkest thou will be the consequence of thy conduct ? Art thou created for eternity ? Canst thou reasonably hope for an everlasting state of blessedness, and guilty of such evil practices as thou daily art ? Can a drunkard, an whoremonger, a liar, or such like enter the kingdom of heaven ? Is it not said a companion of fools shall be destroyed ? How then canst thou entertain any hope, that it shall go well with thee ? On this the man perhaps alters his conduct, begins to reform, and when he is enabled to live more decent and orderly, he is apt to think it may yet be well with him, here many rest : but who can suppose that that conviction which is answerable to the demands of the law can or doth proceed

proceed no further? Therefore whoever thou art who hast experienced no greater degree of the Spirit's operation, in a way of legal illumination, than to influence thee to break off from thy notorious and scandalous practices, know that thou art lulled asleep in the arms of satan, and the deceitful workings of thine own abominable and corrupted nature. Leaving these persons, we will inquire and say, doth the Spirit of the Lord leave his elect people here? It may be replied no, he shews them that God by his law, not only requires a decent and orderly life and conduct, but an universal conformity to his commands, and probably applies that, or a like portion of scripture to their consciences, *James* ii. 10. 11. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all: for he that said, do not commit adultery, said also do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." This alarms them fully, persuades their consciences they are yet in a state of condemnation, and in danger of perishing for ever; terrified hereby and considering the difficulty of their task, they pray unto the Lord both in private and public for grace to assist them in so extensive and laborious an undertaking, and now apply themselves with much assiduity to an universal and uniform practice of what they apprehend the Lord enjoins: (not ap-
prized

prized of any requirements beyond an outward conformity to the injunctions of the law) proceeding on this principle they cannot but be conscious of manifold and frequent failures: to remedy this evil they conceive repentance is not only required but will entitle them to the merits of Christ; hereupon they endeavor to reflect on all the sins of commission they have been guilty of, omissions of duty they are chargeable with, and lament with tears these their iniquities, pray for mercy, and finally conclude Christ's merits certainly are available for the remission of them, purposing to be more watchful and strict, and perhaps vow unto the Lord they will be obedient in all things in future, his grace assisting them. Thus they may go on for some considerable time sinning and repenting, till that spirit of truth by whom the scriptures of truth were written, shew them they are very far from pleasing God; for although they be only observant of the things around them and conversant with sensible and external objects to the exclusion of an internal self reflection, the divine Spirit shews them that the Lord looks further than to the outward conduct, as it is he who searches the heart. This he convinces them of by such or the like scriptures as *Jer. xvii. 10. I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings;* or *John iv. 24. God is a spirit, and they that worship him*

him must worship him in spirit and in truth. This at once sinks all their hopes, they are apt to say within themselves who is sufficient for these things? Concluding it must be so, viz. that the Lord seeth not as man sees, looking on the heart and not on the outward appearance only, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. they at last acknowledge that to the present moment they have had no solid ground of hope that the Lord is reconciled to them, inasmuch as the whole stream of their obedience has been without any proper source from whence it should flow: what shall they do in this case is the question with them. Dismayed at the exceeding greatness of the attempt, not only of an external but an internal conformity to the law of God, they are almost ready to give up all hope of being saved, as no man possibly can fulfil a task so difficult; now that divine agent who first alarmed them, brings to their minds with still greater power the awfulness of eternity, the exceeding preciousness of their souls, the uncertainty of their lives, and the great jeopardy and danger they are in of dropping into everlasting misery; hereupon they at once awake out of their lethargy, no longer hesitate whether they shall go forward or not, but are stimulated more than ever to that diligence, without which they apprehend they certainly shall not escape eternal torment; now they begin indeed to seek the Lord, they call earnestly upon him, as such who

who are convinced their all is at stake, they now watch their hearts, consider their disposition towards God and towards man, labour to have their minds pure from all corrupt imaginations, and aim to love both their creator, and those who are around them; they strive to be the subjects of every social virtue, and to manifest every temper which may be denominated truly amiable, aspiring to nothing short of an universality of obedience to the divine law, respecting their duty both to God and man, and not external only but in and from the heart; at this satan is much alarmed.— Now is the soul become the object of his particular attention, and the subject of his grievous temptations: atheistical and blasphemous thoughts are now suggested, doubts concerning the authenticity of divine writ injected, innumerable objects presented to the imagination to corrupt and defile it, conscience tortured with accusations; yet is the man seeking by his conformity (not simply as before in an external manner only but in heart also) to the law of God, to recommend himself to the divine favor; and if not to render himself worthy, yet at least to qualify himself to be a partaker of the merits of Christ. Wherefore on his failures from time to time (for many he is conscious of) he renews his repentance, calls to remembrance his sins, and upon his supposed hearty sorrows, and solemn vows of stricter care and watch-

fulness, he concludes that the Lord forgives him for Christ's sake, and that in his merits he must be interested ; for who, says he, should be partakers of so great a blessing, but such who truly repent of their sins, aim and labour to obey God, both in heart and life ? Notwithstanding all this the Spirit of the Lord leaves not the souls of his people here, but secretly questions whether they do in reality love the Lord ; if it be not doubtful ; supposing the dread of everlasting wrath were removed whether they would persevere a step farther in the ways and commands of God ; and at last shews them that the law requires a disinterested love to the Lord, not from a fear of his displeasure, but for himself ; and then brings close to the conscience the following portions, or others suitable thereto. *Deut. xxvii. 26.* " Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of the law to do them. 28, 45, and 47. Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, 'till thou be destroyed : because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments, and his statutes which he commanded thee. And they shall be upon thee for a sign, and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and gladness of heart." Now they are beat out of all their hopes ; these injunctions and threatenings instead

instead of begetting in them the pure and genuine love and obedience before spoken of, they become very well acquainted with what Paul intends, *Rom. vii. 5. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death*; and verse 8. *But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence*; and therefore begin truly to despair of attaining everlasting life by a legal righteousness, and are made sensible that the nature within them will not admit thereof, confirming by experience the testimony of the sacred oracles. *Rom. viii. 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* As the present enquiry concerns the law only administered by the Spirit, we shall (the soul so convinced as aforesighted) prosecute this head no further, but proceed to our second head, viz. Doth the Spirit of the Lord take the same method with all his elect people in his legal operations on their hearts? (that is) with respect to degree and time.

To say he doth would contribute not a little to grieve those, whom the Lord would have made glad; and administer matter of doubt to many, of their effectual calling, who have the greatest cause to claim interest in so admirable a blessing; conclude we then in the negative. Surely while a Lydia, the jaylor, the dying thief, and the Lord's dealings with

with them, stand on divine record, the conclusion will be found just and true ; for who dare limit the Holy One of Israel ? Can he not do by his own as pleases him ? Is his arm shortened, that he cannot (if agreeable to his will) convince as well instantaneously, as in a day, a month, a year, or in many years ? Undoubtedly he can. —— Wherefore as this assertion is controverted but by few, who are taught the truth as it is in Jesus, we will conclude this chapter, and pass on to the third particular proposed.

C H A P. II.

The End and Design of the Holy Spirit in his Operations on the Elect, by the Moral Law as an Instrument.

HAVING in the preceding chapter inquired into the manner of the divine agency through the law in order to effectual calling ; what remains is an answer to the following question, viz.

What are the ends the Lord the Spirit designs in his operations through the moral law as an instrument ?

A reply to this inquiry hath been hinted at by many preceding observations ; nevertheless let us investigate, or search out

First,

First, Negatively, what he doth not design.

Secondly, What he intendeth.

First, He designs not by his illumination in the hearts of his elect people, through the law, to present them acceptable to God, or to justify them, viz. 1st, either in their practice, 2dly, in their thoughts and cogitations, 3dly, or in their nature morally considered.

First, By his legal operations he justifies them not in their practice ; or rather, he declares them not just. Indeed their practices may not be so vile as those of others in consequence of these operations, this is the ground of most men's hope : they hope to be saved, not so much on account of their goodness, but because others surpass them in wickedness. As for our part say they, though we be drunkards, rioters, or even adulterers, yet we are honest hearted, mean no man evil ; the character of the cunning, deceitful, insidious, and treacherous man belongs not to us : we are open, free, generous, and speak our minds, and hope therefore God will accept us, though we be not so sour, starch, and precise as some religious hypocrites, who doubtless are wicked enough in private. This is the language of the debauchee, and what is called the pretty gentleman, and how many adopt the like sentiment of themselves, who

run not to the same excess in iniquity, a very small acquaintance with mankind will shew ; but however men in general flatter themselves, the Spirit of the Lord will not, for he is a Spirit of truth: indeed neither the word nor Spirit can or will condemn a man for iniquities, of which he is not guilty, for the open perpetration of crimes he never committed. Yet this implies not but he may be in the sight of God, a sinner far more atrocious ; therefore unless a man be in reality perfectly conformable to the law of God in his external conduct, this ever-blessed, faithful, and divine agent will afford no such witness, and consequently he bestows no such testimony to the consciences of his people by the instrumentality of the law ; for the words of our Lord spoken on another account will be valid in this, *John xvi. 13. When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.*

Secondly, He justifies not their thoughts and cogitations, and consequently not the subjects of them : for confirmation hereof attend we to what the Lord himself declares, *Cen. viii. 21. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* As also to chap. vi. ver. 5. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Which scriptures compared with the surrounding contexts respectively, every judicious and considerate person must allow, describe mankind

kind universally, not only before but after the deluge, even to the end of time, to be wholly corrupt even in their inmost thoughts ; which truth the great apostle of the Gentiles perspicuously evinces by his declaration, *Rom. vii. 14. We know that the law is spiritual ; but I am carnal, sold under sin.* — For if this was the case with that eminent man of God, who then will be so bold as to exempt himself ? However it may be the apprehension of some that they are exempted ; whatever fallacious notions they may have of their own hearts ; the Lord the Spirit will not leave those unto whom he intends to manifest gospel truths with a saving efficacy, under such a delusion. This divine agent will shew them, that their hearts are full of the abominations he himself hath declared, by applying his law with so powerful an energy, as to convince them thereof in such a degree, that they shall at least confess it to the Lord, if not to those around them.

If this be the case of all mankind, what will become of the hopes of the formalist ? The man who pays no further attention, than to his outward conduct ? Alas ! What will all his religious attendances ; what will all his private devotions avail him ? Can these be pure, if his heart be corrupt ? Are not the actions of every rational creature the effects of his cogitations ? May we not ask another question and say, what will become of all

his boasted civility, honesty, and rectitude in his conduct (though he make conscience not only of his duty towards God, but man also) to those around him, if he pay no attention to his thoughts; and to the dispositions of his mind? May not actions materially good, and beneficial unto them to whom they are done, spring even from that mind which reflects not at all on God? Is not pride, vain glory, love of applause, self interest, not only the spring of action with respect to civil, but religious matters also? And are not these the prevailing principles in the world? But admitting a man's external conformity to the law of God would justify him, where is the man who hath obeyed (even in this sense) in all things during his whole life; nay for a year, a month, or a week? or can any man say, he hath externally been obedient in all things even for a day? If not, what will become of such proud pretensions as some boast of? Surely they are vain and delusory, arising from a corrupted mind, which is blinded by the great adversary of the human species!— Certain it is, there have been and without doubt still are self-righteous persons, who aim both in thought and deed at a consistency with the divine injunctions, whose constant practice is an indefatigable endeavour to be in mind and conduct, what the Lord would have them, according to their legal apprehensions of his will. Will not the Lord the

the Spirit justify in conscience such? Will not he afford to them his testimony, that they please the Lord? If they be precluded from this inestimable blessing, who then is to enjoy it? The answer is, *Whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, Rom. iii. 19.* And what doth the law say? Why it saith, *Gal. iii. 10. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them:* and admitting the law to be spiritual, extending to the thoughts of the heart, the answer must be by all esteemed satisfactory; unless it can be supposed the lawgiver should give testimony contrary to his own law. Having now clearly shewn that no man is perfect in his outward conduct, it will follow secondly, that no man always thinks on and considers the things he is enjoined; but allowing a person should attain to this, yet the divine Spirit would convince such a person (if one of his elect people) that the Lord regards the nature of our religious thoughts, as well as demands the existence of them, and expects that our actions should arise from a mind wholly inclined to obedience, and not only so, but inclined by a supreme love to our Creator, chiefly on account of his loveliness; this corrupt nature can never do, therefore the Spirit of the Lord in the court of conscience will not justify the person of such, since *Rom. viii. 7, 8. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not sub-*

ject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Thirdly, Neither is it the purpose of the Holy Ghost, in the illumination of the mind by the law, to declare a rectitude in the nature of fallen man.

The former conclusions being granted, this position will be readily allowed ; if there were no corrupt principle within, if the principle within be pure, if the heart and nature were rightly set, whence should arise this alienation from God, and propensity to the creature ; yea, that hatred to the Lord and his ways, and delight in the ways of iniquity, which the unregenerate are awful examples of, and to which the regenerate find within them a mighty bias, which would (without doubt) swallow them up, unless the Lord the Spirit did continually within them counteract it ? But if notwithstanding, any one should think that this divine witness affords through the moral law any such declaration to the conscience, let him not so conclude, unless he can produce some passage out of sacred writ to prove it.

Come we now to the inquiry, what the Lord intendeth by his operations on the consciences of his people through the moral law as an instrument.

First, His grand and chief purpose is to condemn.

Secondly, The manner in which it is effected is to make sin bitter.

First,

First, His grand and chief purpose is to condemn ; not everlastingly, but to convince the man, who is the subject of his operations, and whom he intends to save, that he is in a state of condemnation. The reason hereof is, because every man through corrupt nature is inclined to hope for happiness in a future state, from considerations which are not founded on truth. The heathen have their hope, so have the Mahometans and Jews, which if scrutiny were to be made into it, would be found fundamentally analogous to the hope of him, who is but a christian in profession ; (that is) they all expect to be saved by their sincere conformity to the law of their sect, to which they respectively appertain. As the subject of the present inquiry is not, whether the Spirit of the Lord doth testify to any man's conscience in this life, that God is pacified towards him, (for this undoubtedly he doth to many, even in this state of existence, through the compleat redemption of Christ, only apprehended by faith :) but whether this divine agent works any such persuasion thro' the instrumentality of the moral law. Leaving therefore for a season a further enlargement on the observation made in the preceding paragraph, viz. that every man by nature builds his hopes for eternal happiness on a false foundation, let us therefore attempt to investigate, whether the above assertion can be proved by the unerring word

word, viz. that the grand and chief purpose of the Lord the Spirit in the hearts of his people by the instrumentality of the moral law is always and invariably to condemn, and never to justify. If this be denied then are we justified by the law, but what saith the scripture: *Rom. iii. 19, 20.*—*That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.* Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; and as if the apostle or the Spirit of God by him would signify his abhorrence to such a supposition, adds the following words, *For by the law is the knowledge of sin;* evidently declaring, that all men at all times are the subjects of sin; that the law is an instrument to discover it unto them; that they who are not ingrafted into Christ are under the guilt thereof, and consequently under its most righteous condemnation. This may be further confirmed by the 15th verse of the following chapter:—*Because the law worketh wrath;* add to this the testimony of our Lord, *John iii. 18.* speaking of himself, *He that believeth on him, is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already.* Why doth our Lord so speak? The answer is plain, because such a person stands answerable for himself, hath no mediator, no savior, is not interested at present in him who came to make full satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of all those who believe in him, for they who do believe are not

not under the law : if then our Lord testifies they are in a condemned state, can it be thought the divine Spirit will witness to their consciences, that they are in a justified state, through their own personal righteousness? By no means! Again.— What saith the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 9! *For if the ministration of condemnation be glory*, if the law be a ministration of condemnation, how can any man expect it in the hand of the divine Spirit, as a ministration of righteousness, peace, joy, and comfort, to be his supposed attainments ever so great? Though it was the experience of this great apostle to delight in the law of God after the inward man, Rom. vii. 22. yet was not his hope built thereon, as evidently appears by the last verse of that chapter, and is also clearly elucidated in the beginning thereof ; nay it is thereby made manifest, that he together with all who had then believed, were previous to their faith alive unto the law, the consequence of which may be observed verses 5 and 10 to be death, that is, a state of death, and therefore under condemnation. Similar to this David speaketh, Psalm cxlii. 2.— *Enter not into judgment with thy servant* ; (he adds a reason,) *for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*. If not justified then condemned. However we do not suppose the penman of these words was in a condemned, but a justified state : therefore his intention must be in opposition to the practice of all

all self righteous persons, that the Lord would not look upon him according to what he was, either in heart or practice, but appear for him according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses, and tender mercies; for if the Lord, he thought, should treat him correspondent to what his pure eyes beheld within and done by him, he must necessarily fall under his eternal displeasure, and not only himself, but no man living could abide the search and scrutiny of him who is infinitely just and holy. Like to this are the words of Job, whose character the Lord himself described, by declaring him a man to whom there was none to be compared, a perfect and upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil, *Job* i. 8. yet let us hear what he saith on this matter, chap. ix. verse 20 to the 22.—“ If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse: though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life: this is one thing, therefore I said it, he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.” These testimonies sufficiently evince the point in hand without addition of further proof, yet let it be concluded with the following passages, *Rom.* v. 20. and vii. 13.—“ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working

ing death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." As then the word of truth and veracity, not of man, but of God, has determined this matter; how comes it to pass that the hope and expectation before taken notice of should naturally possess the breast of every man? In reply to this question we may observe, that there is a true hope, which springs from an unfeigned faith, confidence, and reliance on the promise of God through Christ alone; this is a foundation in direct opposition to the law, *Rom.* iii. 27, 28. But the natural man's hope is built on a supposed conformity either to God's law, or to a law conceived to be from him: therefore as before observed, the heathen have their hope, yet not founded on their conformity to the written law of God, for they have it not, but to the law of nature, and to the idolatrous rites and customs established amongst them. The like observation may be advanced in relation to the Mahometans respecting their Alcoran, and the rites instituted by their great prophet. The Jews depend on their obedience to the moral and ceremonial law of God, though therein shamefully deficient; and nominal christians in general (atheists and deists who go under that name excepted) on Christ: if they do so, may it not be objected they shall do well? Are not they who trust in Christ to be saved? In reply to such que-

rists let it be answered, that these christians before mentioned depend on the law too ; they hope by their righteousness (whether peculiarly strict or singularly licentious) to be qualified for an interest in the merits of Christ's death, and perhaps in his righteousness also, judging whatever defects attend their obedience, the merits of Christ will make ample amends to the justice of God, in order that they may be received to his favor either on account of their good deeds and service, or perhaps it may be, because they have not been guilty of as many slips as others. Alas, what a mistake is here in a point so momentous as the eternal state of the soul ! How do such persons reflect on the attributes and perfections of God ? Or do they reflect at all ? Is not every excellency in God essential to him ? Is it not himself ? Is he not an infinite being ? If his attributes cannot be considered in him as qualities or endowments, as the properties of creatures are, without all question they must be infinite ; therefore his purity and holiness, justice, truth, mercy, love, and goodness must be so too. Could it be supposed that the Lord created man, and designed him for no end, rational creatures might have some shadow of reason for entertaining such hopes as before noticed ; but how unworthy is such a thought of God ! Shall not that man who begins a piece of work, without first fixing on the end for which he begun

begun it, be esteemed by all a very weak person : why then should not every one be persuaded that infinite wisdom does nothing but for an end answerable to its dignity ? If angelic creatures are brought into existence, to what end is this but to love, fear and reverence him who created them, and to declare his infinite goodness, according to their creature capacity ? To be indifferent in their praise or service would be criminal. Was not man in a state of rectitude obliged to the same homage and thankfulness ? Was there the least deficiency in Adam's worship, that the law of creation demanded ? If not, how then is it that we imagine God should be satisfied with our imperfect services ? The laws of an earthly prince change not through the transgressions of offenders ; what though thousands (through their evil propensity) object to his injunctions or prohibitions, do not they still abide unaltered, and their penalty take place, without any respect to the excuses of offenders ? If this be the case with regard to human laws, and all men judge it equitable so to be, how is it we conceive that the Lord will be now satisfied with an obedience short of what his law requires, because we through the sin of our first federal head Adam have lost our power of yielding that conformity which it demands ? Therefore it is evident the recovery of fallen man must be in every respect satisfactory to the law, and honor-

able to the justice and righteousness of the law-giver; nay God's glory being the chief end in man's salvation, how can this be effected but in the display of the infinite purity, justice, love and mercy of the eternal Jehovah in the accomplishment thereof? For the glory of the Lord, what is it but the manifestation of himself, when considered with reference to creatures? Can therefore the pagan idolater glorify God by his hope? If he hath violated the natural law under which he is (and that he hath there is no doubt) how shall the justice of God be satisfied for his offences, who is without Christ, and to whom his righteousness is not known, much less imputed? For we have no reason from scripture to believe that adults without any knowledge of Christ, can be in a state of salvation, but rather the contrary, *Psalm lxxix. 6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. Acts iv. 12. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* To corroborate which sentiment let us hear what the Church of England declares.— Article 18. “ They also are to be had accursed, “ that presume to say, that every man shall be “ saved by the law or se^t which he professeth, so “ that he be diligent to frame his life according to “ that law and the light of nature. For holy “ scripture

“ scripture doth set out unto us only the name of
“ Jesuſ Christ, whereby men must be ſaved.”—
Leaving therefore the pagan we would further
ſay, can the hope of the Mahometan, or Jew glo-
rify God, the former preferring the figments of
an impostor to the ſalvation of Christ, and the
latter denying the ſavior of mankind ? Or do they
not both stand in need of a Savior ? Did they
never offend, or were they never deficient in their
obedience, even to the law of nature ? Come we
now to the ſelf-righteous christian. Does his hope
glorify the Lord ? Let us again conſider the foun-
dation of it. He hath been, and ſtill is an open
prophane person, but he is not ſo bad as others ;
therefore he expects mercy through Christ ; on
what is this expectation grounded ? Not on Christ
as a complete ſacrifice for ſin, but on the conſide-
ration of others being viler than him. Others
there are who conceive ſuch an hope will not do,
they muſt repent, be heartily ſorry for their ini-
quities, amend and reform their lives, God then
will accept them through a mediator : perhaps
ſome may be found who are perſuaded that the
Lord is a ſearcher of the heart, and trier of the
reins of the children of men, and therefore ſuch
think they muſt not only repent of their evil ac-
tions, but of their evil thoughts alſo, and are not
contented with amendment of life only, but are
alſo laboring for rectitude of heart : hence they
conclude

conclude God will have mercy on them for his Son's sake." But suppose we make the following inquiry, to whom do the benefits of Christ's redemption extend : They reply to all ; to every son and daughter of Adam ; God forbid it should be otherwise. Did not Christ die for the world ? Did not he give himself for mankind ? But what if we further question such persons, do you believe that every individual son and daughter of Adam shall be saved, or do you believe that any for whom Christ died shall be lost ? They answer, we believe he died for mankind universally ; notwithstanding which, says the profane christian, if I had been so bad as such a one, alas ! I should have no hope ; and unless I had repented and amended my life says the outwardly decent man, how could I have expected salvation ? Would not my practice have been flatly against the word of truth ? *1 Cor. vi. 8, 9.* But surely the Lord is merciful to those who repent, and do the best they are able ! The third class is ready to say, is it not written, a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forthli good things. *Matt. xii. 35.* What availeth the sacrifice where the heart is not ? Is not the Lord a spirit ? Surely unless I had been truly sorry not only for my practical iniquities but my evil imaginations also, and had amended in both, and become another man, alas ! what would have become of me ! I know

not

not what such persons can think of Paul's declaration, *Heb. x. 14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, (or separated:) by this passage it appears that they for whom the Lord offered himself are perfected: they must either say they were not perfected, and so deny the text, attributing the benefits of this offering to the removal of original guilt and pollution only, or call in question the sufficiency of the means by which they were perfected; and attribute to the subjects of this blessing a share therein, viz. on account of their repentance, amendment, &c. by which the offering spoken of became available.— If so common sense will draw the inference, viz. that the cause of salvation must be their repentance, amendment, &c. But if these things be not without sin, how can the infinite holiness, and justice of God be glorified thereby? Surely persons of these characters glorify not the Lord Jesus Christ by their hope, inasmuch as they conclude something must be added to what he hath done and suffered, to render his redemption complete; even the redemption of him who was no other than the eternal God: rather what a reflection on his wisdom, power, and goodness would it be to imagine he should stand in need of the holiness and righteousness of angels to render his undertaking available to the end designed by his infinite wisdom, how much less of the services of those whom

he himself declares to be wholly flesh: viz. wholly sinful in all the powers of their souls, and consequently in all the actions of their lives before they be vitally united to him! For what faith this Savior of mankind? *John iii. 6. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* Having therefore shewn and proved what the hope is which every fallen son and daughter of Adam possesses, let us enquire into its source. The apostle Paul declares of himself, as also of the believing *Phillipians*, that neither he nor they had any such hope, chap. iii. verse 3.—*We are (says this apostle) the Circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* The word flesh in this passage will be found upon inquiry to intend all the privileges a natural man can enjoy, either respecting a civil or religious character, as also what he is capable of either internally or externally, that is, respecting the operations of mind, will, and other faculties of the soul, as also the fruit and effect of such operations in the conduct and behavior. This confidence the apostle disclaims, knowing that a corrupt fountain cannot emit pure streams, nor a poisonous root produce wholesome fruit. Had not this been his persuasion how could we have accounted for what he saith, *Ephes. ii. 5. Even when we were dead in sins (even I Paul together with you believing Ephesians) hath he (viz. God) quickened us together with Christ:*

Christ : he adds, *By grace ye are saved* : and in the 8th and 9th verses, *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Compare this with *Rom. iv. 4. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* Doth it not appear from hence, the apostle was persuaded that all confidence in a man's goodness, holiness and rectitude touching acceptance with God ; in his ability and power to perform spiritual acts of duty and worship antecedent to faith in the gospel for a free reconciliation (though such a one reject not altogether the redemption of Christ) is a confidence in a non-entity, in vanity, in a chimera of a depraved imagination through sin and the fall ? Why does the apostle make use of this expression “ in the flesh ” ? Because all confidence in a man's self springs immediately from pride (a principal member of the old man) *Rom. vi. 6.* There being no other source whence it can arise ; of which truth if any one doubt let him compare the following scriptures together : *John iii. 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh* ; verse the 18th, *He that believeth not is condemned already.* *John vi. 53. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you.* *Rom. iii. 18. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* *Rom. iv. 5. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the*

ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Will not such a one find that these verses compared declare every man by nature to be wholly flesh, in a condemned state, and in order to have spiritual life manifested in them, they must believe with a faith, which excludes works altogether ; and must come as ungodly persons in themselves, (having no worthiness to recommend them) to the Lord, whose determination it is to justify, not the righteous, but ungodly ? Such an act of faith we may affirm, is the first effect of spiritual life, unless we can suppose acts arising from the new nature, previous to its being, which supposition is not only most absurd, but will be found very difficult to be reconciled with holy scripture, even with the aforesaid portion, *John* vi. 53. as also with *Rom.* xiv. 23. and many other parts of the sacred oracles. From all which it appears that the hope now considered is a fleshly hope, that it is as much specifically a fruit of the flesh, as the vices mentioned *Gal.* vi. 19, are ; because it is a presumptuous and vain expectation, without any warrant from the lip of truth. Did men in general, nay did even the Lord's people more attentively reflect hereon, what perplexity and evil would be avoided ! But surely the old nature will by no means suffer it. It is faith how can there possibly be any hope, where there is no personal conformity to the law ? To expect favor from God without

out a better heart and behaviour is a self-deception. Hath not God commanded all men every where to repent? *Acts xvii. 30*, and doth not this imply, that if they so do and amend their liyes there is hope? Thus the flesh, where the conscience is awakened will be prompting the soul not to turn to Christ alone, not to a reconciled God in him only, laying itself at the feet of pure and infinite mercy, will not influence it to come as a sinner to the complete righteousness of Jesus, authorised so to do, by the free promise of God to the chief of offenders, and on this foundation to build its hope for complete salvation, both from the guilt and power of iniquity, (acknowledging it hath not even a good thought to plead in its own favor) but rather to qualify itself for God's mercy, and to seek even to God for grace to be rendered worthy of a share in the merits of his Son, or at least to be made meet for so great a privilege. From all which observations may it not be inferred, that the end the divine Spirit pursues through the law on the consciences of his people is, to shew them step by step that they have no solid ground for hope on the footing of a legal conformity, either in a greater or a less degree, to convince and thoroughly to persuade them, that after all their repentance, amendment, and seeming conversion of heart and life they still are sinners, altogether such, polluted in heart and

practice, and that they as yet never possessed the least conformity to the righteous law of God, even in their imaginary best seasons? If not, how shall we understand the apostle in his reasonings on this point? *Rom. iv. 13, 14.* and following verses: —“ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: (he adds a reason in the following verse) Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression.” Now observe his inference. “ Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.” How full and conclusive is this argument! How cogent! Not only to prove that our legal obedience in no wise will entitle us to everlasting blessedness, but that it hath no share in the procurement thereof; if it had, why is grace and faith here opposed to the law? Why doth the apostle say in the fifth verse, *But to him that worketh not.* Why doth he ask that remarkable question, *Gal. ii. 17. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.* Surely if some legal righteousness in us were necessary, either before or after faith in Christ; if this were requisite for justification, for the favor of

of God, and to attain the blessings promised, let any unprejudiced person consider, whether in the apostle's opinion hereby signified it would not be a judging Christ's redemption incomplete, and consequently concluding so divine a personage the minister of sin. That this is the argument of this great apostle in these words, let the drift of the whole epistle be seriously weighed, and compared with other parts of his writings, but more particularly with that striking passage of his, *Rom. xi. 5, 6.* and it will sufficiently appear. "For," says he, even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if of grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work." What shall we say then, but with the apostle in the aforesaid passage of his, *2 Cor. iii. 9.* that the law, though in the hand of the divine Spirit, is not a ministration of hope; but a ministration of condemnation, calculated for and used to the purpose only of slaying the power of self-righteousness, as elsewhere expressed by him, viz. *Rom. x. 9.* *But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Respecting human authority, in reference to this point, who so worthy as *Martin Luther*, that great reformer of Europe from popery to be consulted? Let us hear what he says. Fol. 152 of his Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians.—

tians.—“ Another use of the law is divine and spiritual, which is (as Paul sayeth) to increase transgressions, that is to say, to reveal unto man his sin, his blindness, his misery, his impiety, ignorance, hatred, and contempt of God, death, hell, the judgment and deserved wrath of God. Of this use the apostle intreateth notably in the 7th to the Romans. This is altogether unknown to hypocrites, to the poorish sophisters and school divines, and to all that walk in the opinion of the righteousness of the law, or their own righteousness. But to the end that God might bridle and beat down this monster and this mad beast (I mean the presumption of man's righteousness and religion) which naturally maketh men proud, and puffeth them up in such sort, that they think themselves thereby to please God highly : it behoved him to send some Hercules which might set upon this monster with all force and courage to overthrow him, and utterly to destroy him ; that is to say, he was constrained to give a law in mount Sinai, with so great majesty, and with so terrible a shew, that the whole multitude was astonished. *Exod. xix. 20.* This, as it is the proper and the principal use of the law, so is it very profitable and also most necessary. For if any be not a murderer, and adulterer, a thief, and outwardly refrain from sin, as the Pharisee did

“ did which is mentioned in the gospel, he would
“ swear (because he is possessed with the devil)
“ that he is righteous, and therefore he conceiv-
“ eth an opinion of righteousness, and presumeth
“ of his good works and merits. Such a one God
“ cannot otherwise mollifie and humble, that he
“ may acknowledge his misery and damnation, but
“ by the law. For that is the hammer of death,
“ the thundring of hell, and lightning of God’s
“ wrath that beateth to powder the obstinate and
“ senseless hypocrites. Wherefore this is the
“ proper and true use of the law, by lightning,
“ by tempest, and by the sound of the trump (as
“ in mount Sinai) to terrify, and by thundring to
“ beat down and rend in pieces that beast which is
“ called the opinion of righteousness. Therefore
“ faith God by Jeremy his prophet, my word is a
“ hammer breaking rocks. For as long as the
“ opinion of righteousness abideth in man, so long
“ there abideth also in him incomprehensible pride,
“ presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt
“ of his grace and mercy, ignorance of the pro-
“ mises and of Christ. The preaching of free re-
“ mission of sins through Christ cannot enter into
“ the heart of such a one, neither can he taste or
“ favour thereof. For that mighty rock and ada-
“ mant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness,
“ wherewith the heart is environed doth resist it.”
As it remains no longer dubious, that the moral
law

law in the hand of the divine Spirit is in no wise ordained to effect any true hope in the consciences of his people before faith, but rather to condemn ; let us therefore lastly consider what was before proposed, viz.

The manner in which condemnation in the conscience is effected ; this is calculated to render sin bitter, and to cause the people of God, before they are brought savinely to him, to stand in awe of sinning. Let it be premised, that the Lord is not confined to time. Many instances there are, whereby the almighty sovereign manifests the exceeding riches of his grace, both in the conviction and conversion of the stout hearted, even in a very short space of time ; perhaps under one discourse such persons may clearly discover their condemned state, their weakness and helplessness ; be favored with so perspicuous a display of the way of salvation by Christ Jesus, and so influenced by a divine energy, that no question may be justly made either by themselves or others, but that they are become the trophies of the Lord's special grace.— However as the present matter of inquiry respects those on whom he more gradually operates as a spirit of bondage ; may we not affirm that the Lord thereby would teach the soul (who is the subject of such operations) the great evil of iniquity, if not in an especial and peculiar light respecting God, yet as relating to itself, and the danger

danger and bitter effects of transgression, thereby leading the mind to fear and stand in awe of persisting still in a course of rebellion. This certainly may be the case of those who are not yet the subjects of faith, and who may not be justly denominated the called of God. In order to prosecute this subject, 'tis necessary to observe, that every rational creature is either actuated by a supreme love to God, and acts in conformity to that principle, or by a supreme love to himself: that any man void of faith in Christ, a stranger to a saving acquaintance with redemption through the mediator, in any degree hates iniquity, and loves the commands of God from a supreme love to him, will be too difficult to prove; either from experience or the word of truth. 'Tis true, many of the heathen poets, philosophers and great men amongst them, inculcated the love of virtue, purely for its amiableness and beauty, also the abhorrence of vice, on account of its intrinsic turpitude and vileness; yet if any among them can be found who practised the one and were not guilty of the other, excited to such a conduct from the above motives without a supreme regard to self interest or self preservation; may it not be confidently affirmed notwithstanding, that a supreme love to the will of God they knew not, either in theory or practice? If then every man hath concreated with him a desire of self preservation and

self advantage, the misery of man fallen and degenerated is, that this principle hath usurped the throne of God in the soul, and will be obeyed by all the faculties, and powers of the man in all things, in preference to God. Hence we see the rise of all legal workings of the heart. Doth the Lord the Spirit convince of notorious scandalous iniquities, of a flagrant and horrid conduct, and condemn the man in his conscience on this account, present to his view the threatenings of the Lord against him, and shew the soul the danger it is in of everlasting misery ? Self love at once begins to stir within it. True, says the man, I must be in danger indeed ! Such as I am I cannot have any hope of pardon ! And what will it profit me in the end if I persevere in those ways ? Certain it is I must perish everlastinglly ; would it not be better for me to break off these ill courses, repent, and be a new man ? Certainly it would ; besides I shall then be delivered from that inward sense of divine displeasure which I now feel, and can I doubt but then the Lord will have mercy upon me ? What is all this but the product of self love, an inclination to reform through fear and dread ? Not any regard to God's glory, concern how he hath been dishonored, much less from any supreme love to him. Now the man sets about the work, not from any hope the divine spirit effects within him : no, but from an imaginary and delusive persuasion,

persuasion, excited, and stirred up by self love, viz. that a reformation from gross practices will save him. For though this divine agent through the law testifies what the man hath to fear, and thereby renders his sins burdensome, painful and tormenting ; yet it is the man's ignorance and pride which are the springs of his false confidence in his reformation from the enormities he before lived in. This hope is maintained according as he perseveres in his resolution of amendment ; but if he relapse, if he break out again into his former excesses, then hath he fresh trouble in his soul ; the law comes upon him with renewed denunciations, and until he can repent, amend, and conduct himself as a reformed person, he hath no quiet, he is miserable, and wretched in every thing he is engaged in ; hence he is led to hate his iniquities, to look upon transgression as a great evil, to fly from them, but ah ! not because they are injurious to the Lord's glory, contrary to his nature, subversive of his authority ; but because of the affliction he feels in his mind in consequence of them, and inasmuch as he cannot think he shall escape everlasting wrath, unless he can conquer and subdue them. Thus the man may go on for some time finning and repenting, until the Lord the Spirit shew him the necessity of heart religion, by revealing to him the perfections and attributes of God, that he is an holy, just, and righteous

God, that he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men, and that he will bring every work into judgment; with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, *Jer. xvii. 10. Ecles. xii. 14.* At this the man is amazed, his hopes are all fled, yet, reflecting there is a Savior provided, he begins to think that if he endeavors to watch not only his ways but his thoughts and purposes he shall do well. Who cannot see that the conviction is from the Spirit of truth witnessing to his own law, to the injunctions and threatenings thereof, shewing the man his danger and the jeopardy he is in? But whence arise his fears? From what quarter comes his hope? Not from the Lord, no; but still from the aforementioned principle, even self-love; he is mightily concerned for self, (which would be a commendable disposition, did it lead him to seek such a refuge, which should prove not only safe for him, but honorable to the Lord) and knowing no other way, than his own personal obedience, still his expectation is from thence, and when he finds that he is deficient, either in thought or deed; much more when he positively transgresses, either in the one or the other, his conscience is afresh wounded, his trouble again renewed, and his hope and expectations fail, and from hence arises his hatred unto his iniquities, both internal and external. All this he doth not without any re-

spect to Christ, no ; but as something, if not to render him worthy of, yet to make him meet for Christ, and thinks there can or ought to be no faith in a Saviour, unless he arrive at these prerequisites. How far short of this, the expectations of many are, let their consciences testify. In this way a man from a profane, unjust, and irreligious person, may become not only a moral, decent and sober, but in the judgment of most a truly sincere and religious man, though still under the law, and may appear both to himself and others to hate sin in heart and life, and yet do so only from a principle of self love, and not at all out of regard to the glory of God, and from a true love to or fear of him. But it may be demanded if a man, notwithstanding sin is rendered bitter unto him and he stands in fear of offending, still remains in the same state, is not in the favor of and doth not love God, why should this work be carried on upon him in this way ? Would it not have been better had it been instantaneous ? In reply, it may be observed, the Lord knows what is best : he is a sovereign agent, and who shall say unto him what doest thou ? Though this be a sufficient answer, yet some reasons may be advanced.

First, where convictions are gradual, the heart is better acquainted with its iniquities.

The man who hath been first convicted of his practical offences, hath by his contendings with

his

his sins and corruptions been brought to a circumstantial knowledge and fear of them ; and if from the evil of his thoughts his strife has not been external only, surely whatever his motive was, he cannot forget the pain and trouble his iniquities gave him ; the remembrance of which when the Lord is pleased to bring him to a saving acquaintance with himself, and to a true and spiritual warfare with the corruptions of his heart, and the temptations of satan in his low seasons, and when grace is at a low ebb in its operations, may restrain him through fear, which though not a virtue, yet may be over-ruled so as to keep him from much matter of sorrow and disquietude, he cannot forget the wormwood and the gall, and as he hath heretofore smarted on account of sin, he is not so easily led unto the sins, for which he hath undergone so much sorrow.

Secondly, As he hath formerly when under a legal work only, (for we are now considering him the subject of grace) seen so much evil in sin, by the pain and affliction it hath given him, and was then led to consider how injurious it was to him, is induced more readily thereby, under the influences of grace to reflect what dishonor to God attends transgression, and is also led more deeply and seriously to meditate on the evil of it, as displayed and manifested in the sufferings of a mediator. We cannot easily forget that which hath given us much bitter uneasiness, and though we

know

knew not when under the affliction, how to improve or rightly to consider the cause thereof; yet we cannot easily forget the source itself from whence it arose, and are more prompt and ready to avoid the evil, than we should be if experience had not taught us what misery is its attendant.

Thirdly and lastly, The Lord the Spirit may be pleased hereby to inure the man to a more than ordinary attention to sin, the evil and consequence of its guilt and dominion; to the end that redemption by Christ may appear more precious and glorious, that the divine favor and love may be more esteemed when revealed; and that all things of time and sense may be eclipsed by Christ, and the blessings appertaining unto him. For as at the hour of death to a saint sensible he is about to quit the body, the sweet and gracious manifestations of divine favor appear with a tenfold lustre: so to a man shaken over the mouth of hell, redemption brought home to the conscience, is received with more abundant joy, thankfulness and gratitude, than by him who might be truly convinced of his iniquity, yet never the subject of such terrors. Wherefore to conclude, let it be well remembered, that the keenest apprehensions of misery infer not a state of freedom, but the weakest application to the provision God himself hath made, and in the manner he hath prescribed, is matter of the greatest joy, whether the subject of such grace can himself perceive it or not.

THE NATURE, PUBLICATION, AND INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE MINISTERIAL OR GOSPEL CALL, AS SUBSERVIENT TO THE OPERATIONS OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT TO THE EFFECTUAL CALLING OF SINNERS TO THE GRACE OF GOD.

C H A P. I.

The Meaning of the Word Gospel, the Blessings thereof, and for whom provided, so as they shall infallibly partake thereof.

AS the use and office of the moral law, in the hand of the divine Spirit, in order to the effectual calling of sinners hath been considered in the former part of this inquiry, what remains to be weighed is the nature, publication, and instrumentality of the ministerial or gospel call, in subserviency to the operations of the same divine agent, to the aforementioned glorious and invaluable purpose.

Though there be no subject of greater importance to, or more demands the attention, study, and serious enquiry of mankind in general, than that which is to be the subject of our present search, viz. the gospel call; notwithstanding which there is none more treated with indifference, neglect, contempt, and even with the most furious opposition

opposition by those very persons, who are invited thereby to partake of its blessings; were these blessings of a common nature we could not look on such conduct in rational creatures, but with amazement; but when we are informed the gospel is that which God has provided, and that it is his invitation, calculated to deliver from everlasting and inexpressible misery, and to instate into eternal and inconceivable felicity, astonishment must seize us at the madness and extreme folly the children of men discover. From what principle this behaviour originates may be investigated in the following pages; yet we have all reason to lament a too great proneness to a disposition so unwarrantable, dangerous and God provoking.—Like to this hath no subject been so violently opposed, neither hath there been any about which the professed ministers and dispensers thereof have been more divided; which thing hath laid a foundation for scepticism in the careless and indifferent, and for much fear, trouble, anxiety, and painful solicitude in the serious, awakened, and truly inquiring mind. There have been and still are some who understand by the word gospel, nothing more than the books of the New Testament in opposition to the Old, by which it must appear according to their exposition of the word, that all the worthies under that dispensation, either came short of eternal blessedness, or were saved

by the law. But let such consider the words of Paul. *Heb.* iv. 2. "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: and though it is added, But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it, yet it profited others, who were not of them whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." Others there are who by the gospel tell you is intended salvation by Christ to every baptized person, whether infant or adult, from the guilt and pollution of Adam's transgression, and that such shall be saved, if they be obedient to the commands and injunctions of the New Testament; what is the language of such an assertion, but that every baptized person is only put into a capacity of saving himself, making the satisfaction of Christ in reference to their sins after baptism, either of no avail or else subordinate to their repentance and amendment? For but few will say they are perfect, yet many there are who conclude that their superior christian conduct and behavior to that of others, and their unfeigned repentance of sins committed, render them if not worthy of, yet at least meet for a title to the merits of the Son of God. To enumerate the various sentiments of the christian world concerning the gospel; to point out wherein they differ, and to animadver^t thereon would be sufficient of itself to fill a volume. Wherefore leaving these things let it be observed as proposed, what the true meaning and

and signification of the word gospel, or what may be intended thereby. The learned tell us, that the word is of Saxon etymology, and signifies God's tidings, or good tidings, in Greek good news. Some observe on the Saxon language that in ancient time spell in that tongue signified speech, and therefore literally may be explained, a good speech. *Leigh* in his *Critica Sacra* takes notice that it is called in the Greek Ἔυαγγελιον, and in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament בְּשִׁלְחָה: the former of the same import as if one should say a joyful message, a good message or news, glad tidings. The latter to the same effect, with this observation, that the word is derived from another which is translated flesh, alluding to the incarnation of the Son of God. Let the above suffice respecting the literal explanation of the word, and proceed we to the examination of the various fenses thereof, as contained in holy scripture.

First, It may be observed, that it signifies glad tidings in general. *Isaiah* lii. 7. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good.* *Jer. xx. 15. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, a man child is born unto thee, making him very glad.*

Secondly, If we compare *Mark* i. 1. and

Luke i. 5. with *Act*s i. 1. we shall find that the word gospel is used for the history of what Christ did and taught, and for which reason many limit the word to this meaning only.

Thirdly, Sometimes it intends the publishing of the doctrine of Christ. 1 *Cor.* iv. 15. *For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.* 2 *Cor.* viii. 18. *And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches.* *Rom.* i. 1. *Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.*

Fourthly, By way of eminency it signifies the most joyful message of salvation, which we may perceive in *Luke* ii. 10. *And the angel said unto them, fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.* *Rom.* x. 15. *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* Wherefore let us inquire

First, What are the good things contained in the gospel?

Secondly, By whom provided, and on whom they shall be infallibly and certainly bestowed.

First, What are the good things contained in the gospel?

gospel? In order to conceive aright both of the necessity and importance of this inquiry, it behoves us not to pass a false judgment on ourselves, touching the state of our souls in God's sight, either in respect to the law or sin, that we suppose not ourselves guiltless when in reality guilty, or pure and holy either in nature or practice when both in the one and the other we are wholly contaminated and polluted; otherwise the inquiry will be unimportant and uninteresting as to us. However as the present scrutiny is made in the strictest connexion with, and the strongest reference unto, the observations made in the first part of this inquiry let us drop any further introduction, and enter immediately upon the examination of the subject.

The first and chief blessing contained in the gospel without doubt is a Savior. What a gift this is, far surpasses the most elevated conception of the tallest archangel; certain it is that the subject is degraded by investigation, and ought rather to be silently and thankfully admired than pried into, even with the least desire to be comprehended; for should we do so the reproof Zophar gave to holy Job would most fitly suit us. *Job xi. 7. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* Paul was so far from any such pretension that he cries out

2 Cor. xix. 15. *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!* Which exclamation we shall cease to wonder at, when we hear him say in another place,—
Acts xx. 28. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood!” therefore this gift is nothing less than infinite, consequently the greatest and most precious gift God could bestow upon the children of men, for what can he bestow preferable to himself? But the Arian will say, this is blasphemy, these expressions are unwarrantable, Jesus Christ though he created all things, yet he received the power whereby he did so from the divine Father; wherefore to attribute the same dignity, honor, and excellency to him, whose power is only derivative and finite, as to the divine Father, who is alone the infinite, self-existent and independent Jehovah, is to be guilty of a capital offence and transgression. To such a caviller it may be replied, art thou afraid to ascribe to the Savior the honor he demands? Nay, that which he hath signified to be the Father’s good pleasure should be ascribed to him? Hear what is said, *John v. 23.* *That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.* If the honor is to be the same certainly though there is a distinction in the personality of the Father and the Son, the divine essence

is one and not divided : this elucidates that portion of sacred scripture, *Titus iii. 14. Who gave himself for us.* Though the Lord Jesus Christ is elsewhere said to be the Father's gift, yet the declaration now cited is strictly true, seeing the above doctrine is fully confirmed by what himself declares, viz. that he and his Father are one, *John x. 30.* and at the same time proves that although he was the gift of the divine Father, yet unless he had given himself, we never could have been partakers of so invaluable a donation. Here let us pause. Have we ever yet attended to this great transaction ? Did we ever seriously consider the misery of a state of sin and guilt ? What are our thoughts of the breach of the first covenant ? Do we esteem that a trifling occurence, a matter in which we are in no wise concerned, at least that it is a dubious point whether it relate to us or not ? Or do we behold it as an offence, wherein every individual son, and daughter of Adam are involved ? Do we judge ourselves to have sinned that sin in him, and so to have become guilty with him, in whom we all were represented, and did seminally exist ? Do we weigh well the atrocity thereof ? That it was committed against an infinite being, and consequently infinite in malignity ? Do we ponder the unhappy consequence of that offence, viz. a rejection from God, and the loss of his image on the soul as the immediate fruit of

that

that rejection ? Have we meditated seriously that from so great a loss immediately sprung innumerable sinful thoughts, words, and actions ; that the inward and outward man through the fall became both radically and practically, not partially but totally and continually defiled and polluted ; and that the least of these innumerable transgressions springing from this defiled nature deserves eternal death ? Have we duly reflected on the miseries and afflictions of this life, their diversity, pungency and with respect to many of them how excruciating and tormenting ! And have we concluded them to be a part and prelude only of the curse due to our iniquities ? If we had we should not lightly esteem the gift before described, but on the contrary view ourselves in the most dangerous and miserable condition without this Savior, without the knowledge of him as ours ; and should comparatively disregard all the things of time and sense, for an acquisition so suitable, important, and interesting. But a question may arise how was this unutterable blessing bestowed, and to what end ?— The reply is

First, He was given in covenant.

Secondly, In promise.

Thirdly, In types.

Fourthly, In the flesh.

First,

First, He was given in covenant. This is apparent from the eighth chapter of the Proverbs particularly from the 22d to the 33d verse, where Christ speaketh of himself under the character of wisdom, declaring " he was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was ;" and concluding with respect to himself so characterised, " rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." For wisdom here cannot be considered as an essential property of the divine nature by the candid and judicious reader, who will afford himself time to reflect on, and weigh with care the connection of the whole passage, which if granted such a person must allow, that the Lord Jesus Christ was given in covenant from eternity. To this we will adduce the declaration of Paul, *Ephes.* i. 4.— According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.— Which certainly establishes not only the everlasting choice of the Lord's people, but the eternal gift of Christ also, inasmuch as all the saints were not chosen apart from but in him, before the foundation of the world. Zechariah (chap. vi. 13.) says, *the counsel of peace shall be between them both*, which cannot be supposed to commence at the incarnation of the Messiah, for to imagine any thing new with the Lord is to think unworthily of him.

For if David could say, *Psalm lxxiv. 20.* long before the prophecy of Zechariah, *Have respect to the covenant*, the counfel mentioned by the latter, must be dated before his time, and if so, why not from everlasting ?

Secondly, The Lord of life and glory was given in promise. This is manifest as early as the fall of our first parents, *Gen. iii. 15.* Evidenced by the translation of Enoch. Confirmed by the preservation of Noah. Repeated to Abraham, *Gen. xv. 17, 18,* to Isaac, chap. xxvi. 4. and to Jacob, as appears by various passages of his life. Whether this were the case with the saints under the Mosaic œconomy, he who doubts thereof must be totally blind, if he reads the Psalms and Prophets and doth not perceive it, as in *Psalm xxvi. 16.* *Isai. liii.* *Dan. ix. 24.* and following verses, and innumerable places of holy scripture.

Thirdly, He was given in types. No one can question this who reflects that the whole ceremonial law was but figurative. If so certainly an adumbration of the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, inclusive of blessings both spiritual and eternal resulting therefrom. These things the saints under that dark dispensation perceived by faith, and centered not in the rites themselves as the matter of their salvation, but pervaded with the eye of their mind

mind these vails and coverings ; and trusted and rejoiced in the glorious things they prefigured and held forth, which is strikingly obvious through the whole epistle to the *Hebrews*, and particularly affirmed in the 13th verse of the 11th chap.—“ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Fourthly, He was given in the flesh. This needs no proof to them who believe the New Testament writings to be of divine authority, the whole tenor thereof fully proving this grand and important matter ; but for a more particular proof we need only refer to *John* i. as also *1 John* i. wherein we have all the evidence we can desire. In this great and amazing act, together with what the Messiah did and suffered, are fulfilled all the promises, Jewish types, and ceremonies which related to him. Surely this is the noblest and most blessed æra that ever commenced among the children of men ! What doth it record less than a visit from the Almighty, his personal presence with and his dwelling among us, sufficient to astonish and strike with the deepest admiration those intellectual spirits, the inhabitants of the celestial world, who never transgressed the commands of their omnipotent sovereign ! Deeply convinced of the infinite condescension of the

eternal Jehovah, in taking notice of what they perform in heaven, how must they have been amazed at this divine procedure, in tabernacling with the sons of men, not possessed of their original rectitude in which they were created, but defiled and polluted! Surely divine mercy, love, pity, and compassion were the grand cause of this wonderful appearance! We were become the awful captives of law and justice, under sin and satan. The Lord well knew that none in heaven or earth, but himself, could redeem us from our thralldom and bondage, and that we must for ever be held in chains of divine vengeance, unless he engaged in this gracious and merciful undertaking. What then is our inquiry? Shall we ask further how was Christ given? 'Tis answered into the hands of law and justice for us and in our stead.— Were we become the subjects of a polluted nature? Christ takes upon him our nature, and is born for us immaculate and spotless; yea beyond the common course by which the children of men derive their existence, *Luke* i. 35. *Rom.* viii. 23. Are we in our present state incapable of that obedience the law requires? Christ engaged to fulfil all righteousness for us, *Psalm* xl. 7. 8. Are we fallen under the infinite displeasure of him that created us, have we run in debt to divine justice ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay? What love! What mercy and compassion doth our Lord express!—

Luke

Luke xii. 50. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished! And that it was accomplished, his resurrection and ascension into the holiest of all for us abundantly prove; for us who never should have been able to have delivered ourselves from hell and the grave, but have remained the awful captives thereof to eternity! Nay, the resurrection of Christ ensures a greater deliverance, viz. a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin to newness of life here, the sure prelude to an entire deliverance hereafter, not only from hell and the grave, but from the very existence of sin itself, that evil which is the cause of all misery. If Christ be so great a gift as before described, yea infinitely transcending all description, the gospel then must contain innumerable divine gifts in consequence of the gift of him, viz. the gift of pardon, *Ephes.* i. 7. Complete righteousness, *2 Cor.* v. 21. Peace with and from God, *Micah* v. 5. *Rom.* v. 1. and xv. 13. Of joy, *Rom.* v. 11. xiv. 17. Victory over sin, *Rom.* vii. 25. Satan, *Rom.* xvi. 20. Nay, the gift of all spiritual blessings, *Ephes.* i. 3. And not only of salvation in life, but also in death; not in time only, but also in eternity, *Phillip.* iv. 19. *Heb.* xiii. 5. *John* xvii. 20, 24. *Hosea* xiii. 14. And in fine the gift of God himself, viz. the divine Father to be our Father, *Gal.* iii. 26. And the Holy Spirit for every blessed end, both in

time

time and eternity, *Gal.* iii. 14. *John* iv. 14. Seeing so rich is the treasure of the gospel, and such the blessings thereof, we come next to inquire, by whom such inestimable benefits are provided. If we attend to our Lord's word, *John* iii. 16. 17; and to the declaration of the apostle Paul, in the 8th chapter and 32d verse of his epistle to the *Romans*, we shall soon be informed of this matter. For he who is truth itself acquaints Nicodemus in the aforesaid passage, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life. And the apostle in the chapter and verse abovementioned asks such a question, which no one will deny to be tantamount thereto, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"— From which testimonies springs the most perspicuous evidence, that the author of so invaluable a treasure is the divine Father. Here be we careful to entertain no absurd and dishonourable thoughts of God. We are not to imagine a plurality of Gods, neither in maintaining the unity of the divine essence are we to deny a trinity of persons or subsistencies, but rather be firmly persuaded that they are co-equal and co-eternal. Doth not our Lord declare his equality by saying to the Jews, *John* v. 17. *My Father worketh hitherto, and*

and I work? And what is the due of the Holy Spirit the apostle Paul hath shewn, *1 Cor. ii. 10.* *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* Therefore the salvation of mankind is equally to be attributed to each of the divine persons in the trinity, seeing the essence is undivided; yet without all doubt in the economy of redemption, the holy scriptures ascribe to each a part respectively, as most proper and peculiar. We find in the word of God, the divine Father is said to bestow the blessings of the covenant, the divine Son as mediator betwixt God and us to have received them, *Ephes. i. 3.* and the Holy Spirit to be that almighty agent who makes his people partakers thereof. Wherefore without danger of temerity we may again affirm, that the divine Father is the fountain of grace, so rich and wonderful as hath been before noticed. For it was from his love that his people were chosen, *Ephes. i. 4. Rom. ix. 13.* Correspondent herewith we hear the Lord himself declare to his ancient church, *Jer. xxxi. 3. Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* After such unerring and incontrovertible witness and testimony, occasion is no longer left us to doubt and hesitate, but we are rather called upon to admire and adore that all gracious source and spring of blessings, so great, glorious and beneficial.— But it may be asked,

For

For whom are all these blessings provided?—
On whom shall they be infallibly and certainly be-
stowed? This question may be answered, viz.

First, negatively.

Secondly, Affirmatively.

First, Not on every individual of the sons and daughters of Adam. If this assertion be untrue how comes it to pass that any are lost? What the grace is hath been before observed, and that any should perish who are made partakers inchoatively thereof, is a supposition most futile and weak; because the grace in their head Christ is answerable to all the circumstances, needs, and necessities that fallen man can be in. Was one man in a better state by nature than another, better qualified to please, or more capable to yield acceptable service to his maker, the enemies of the truth might have some pretext and colour, to conclude that the Lord in his eternal purposes was governed by his foresight of what the children of men would be, according to the respective operations of their own free-will; but since an inspired apostle hath renounced all such pretensions, *Rom.* iii. 9. that alone cuts the sinews of every such conclusion, and makes it evident that such doctrine is vain and delusory. Therefore without the special grace of God bestowed, eter-

nal blessedness cannot be enjoyed by any: wherefore it will not be enjoyed by those who always continue in a natural state, and ever remain destitute of regenerating mercy, whatever their supposed natural endowments may be; and on the contrary it is no ambiguous assertion, that whoever at any time in this world are so favored, are certainly chosen to, and will infallibly enjoy the beatific vision of God to eternity. If this be a true position, and if God himself hath declared in various and innumerable passages of his word, that many, yea very many will fall under his everlasting displeasure, then we may infer that the gospel treasure is not ordained, designed, or appointed to be bestowed on every individual of mankind.

Secondly, It is not intended to be bestowed on every one who hears the gospel promulgated and declared. Our Lord speaks of many called but few chosen. *Matt. xx. 16.* Not that we are to understand hereby that the Lord rejects any who come unto him, or that all are not invited, who fit under the sound of that call, for he hath declared the contrary by the commission given to his disciples, *Mark xvi. 15, 16.* " And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believ-

eth not shall be damned." From whence it is manifest, that many hear the gospel but believe it not. Some believe not the message to be divine, but reject and despise it ; and others who entertain a favorable opinion thereof, yet are not so enlightened into a perception and discovery of its glories and excellencies as to attract them to a saving confidence in the mediator therein provided, and in the veracity of a promising God thro' him ; the reason of which you have *Ephes.* ii. 8. *For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God.* If faith be the gift of God, and he is not pleased to afford it to some, they who are denied this blessing, to them the gospel (though they hear it and fit under it) will become unprofitable and vain, and prove instead of a favour of life unto life, a favour of death unto death.—The Lord preserve us from so awful a circumstance, and excite us to the greatest diligence and attention, that we receive not the grace of God (or the gospel) in vain ! *2 Cor.* vi. 1.

Thirdly, Not every convinced sinner shall certainly and infallibly be the subject of the blessings before described.

Here we may distinguish between the conviction of the law, and that which arises from the gospel.

First, In reference to the latter. As the dispensation

penitence thereof is a dispensation of truth, it may and certainly doth become an instrument of conviction in the hearts of men, by the eternal Spirit : but as this point more particularly relates to the main and chief subject of the present inquiry, it will be expedient to defer at present any further enlargement thereon. Therefore

Secondly, Not every sinner convinced by the law is made a partaker of gospel blessings : this will be manifest on reference to the sacred pages. Cain could say *Gen. iv. 13.* " Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven ;" rendered by our translators, " My punishment is greater than I can bear." It appears from hence he was convinced, but if we consult the 11th verse of *Jude*, we shall find he knew nothing by experience of gospel grace, " Wo unto them for they have gone in the way of Cain." Balaam is another striking instance of conviction, not only from the law, but also of the excellencies of the gospel, and yet the aforesaid verse from *Jude* shews plainly he knew not the grace of God in truth. Ahab could humble himself and yet remain a wicked man still ; and Judas could repent, but not with that repentance that needed not to be repented of. But it may be objected, that though every one convinced by the law be not favored with gospel grace, yet they who are deeply so

convinced must necessarily be the subjects of that grace. The reply is

First, That no legal conviction can entitle to gospel blessings. This appears from *Gal.* iii. 10. *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.* If a knowledge of our being under the curse will entitle to so great a benefit, how comes it to pass that men are so apt to despair when this knowledge is increased within them? No man is comforted from conviction, unless he conceive his perception of himself, and the disposition wrought within him denotes repentance, arising from some degree of special grace as its principle. On the contrary the stronger he concludes he is under the condemnation of the law, and the curse of God, and possesses no hope from any other quarter, the more his heart will rage against the Lord, and the farther he will fly from him. The hope handled in the first part of this tract, was made appear to spring not from the fulness of legal conviction, but from the reformation, labors, and endeavors of the sinner to fulfil the law's requirements, conceiving that if he did his best, the Lord would accept of him for Christ's sake. But experience teaches that when a man is condemned after the utmost assiduity and pains taken, he can conceive but little hope from a sense of his misery only. Therefore as the sinner apprehends no expectation

peſtation to be derived from a consciousness that he is in a condemned state; if he is led to plead the mercy of God in Christ, it is wholly to be attributed to the secret workings of the divine Spirit, as a spirit of adoption through the gospel.— "Tis observed by ſome, that the Lord never wounds, but with an intent to heal; never deeply convinces the conscience of ſin by the law, but he bestows gospel grace; and through a peculiar attachment to this principle they are apt to conclude, that to be convicted is to be in a ſtate of grace, alledging the following scriptures, *Deut. xxxii. 39. I kill and I make alive. Hosea vi. 1. Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath ſmitten, and he will bind us up.* And other portions to the like purpose, which if properly conſidered will appear either to relate to God's ſovereignty, or respect his people who are already the ſubjects of faith lately planted, which in its operations may be very fitly compared to a grain of muſtard ſeed; as also to ſuch who have been the ſubjects of awful backſlidings, and are now returning to their heavenly Father. Were it not ſo, what expositiōn could be given of many portions of ſacred writ, would be difficult to ſay.— Paul tells us, *Rom. xiv. 23. Whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin.* And in *Heb. ix. 14.* declares, that the conſcience is purged only by the blood of Christ, which blood can alone be applied by faith.

faith. The words of our Lord are on this point, *John vi. 53. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* What else is to be understood here by eating and drinking, but believing. If these be the words of truth, how can conviction imply conversion? Or that conscience which is wounded only by legal terrors be denominated a pure conscience in any degree? Wherefore it would be most eligible for persons so circumstanced to fly unto the refuge set before them in the gospel, or examine whether the workings of the law are not opposed within them by evangelical operations, whether there be not some small degree of faith contending with much unbelief, some true love though mixed with much false affection, a grain of filial amidst a great measure of slavish fear; and conclude of their state, rather from what they can find within them of the gospel, than of the law. Conclude we then, that though frequently God is pleased to use the law, to shew us our misery, in order that we may return unto him by the gospel, yet the legal convictions we may experience can give us no title to his favor, but only the free promise of God in his word. Would an offender against the civil law plead with his judge, that he expects pardon because he is convinced that he is guilty? This must be referred to the clemency of the judge, and must be expected in a way of mercy only. What

faith

faith *Luther* on this point ? In his Exposition of the Galatians, folio 171. you have these words, — “ The law then must be laid upon those that “ are to be justified, that they may be shut up in “ the prison thereof until the righteousness of faith “ come : not that they attain this righteousness “ through the law (for that were not to use the “ law rightly, but to abuse it) but that when they “ are cast down and humbled by the law, they “ should fly unto Christ, who is the end of the “ law for righteousness to every one that “ believeth.”

Secondly, That whilst a man is under legal convictions only, it remains a truth he is under the power of the law, and consequently in a state of spiritual death. Memorable is the observation of *Cameron* on this point : his words are in his Exposition of *Rom.* viii. 15. “ Man by nature “ before he is illuminated by God, into the know- “ ledge of the law, lieth asleep in his sin, and “ ignorant of his misery ; a man even to the first “ moment of this illumination (as Paul testifies “ of himself, *Rom.* vii. 9.) esteems, or judges he “ lives, viz. he lives quietly, peaceably, and “ easy ; but when his conscience is troubled by “ the law, he immediately dies, that is, he is “ wonderfully disquieted in mind and astonished. “ If this is not the case he may set about what is “ good

" good (which he never would have desired, unless the commandment had enjoined it): therefore his application is not cordial, out of love thereto; or if he keep himself from evil (which by nature is altogether pleasing to him) he undertakes the same with difficulty and reluctance, or else casting his eyes upon the curse with which the Lord threatens the contumacious, is persuaded he cannot escape, unless God in some way which he is ignorant of should help him, being incapable of reflecting on the curse without distraction, fear, and horror. This illumination is not from the quickness of the understanding of the human mind, but is from the Holy Spirit, which is here called a spirit of bondage, because that man in which the Spirit so works cannot but be a slave, through the weakness of the flesh; indeed he is simply a slave if he be the subject of legal light and knowledge only." From hence appears, that this great reformer was fully persuaded of what is now laid down in our present proposition, and well he might, since the Lord in his word hath clearly and obviously revealed it. Who can attentively consider the four first verses of Paul's seventh chapter to the *Romans* and be ignorant thereof? Doth not the apostle shew *Rom.* iii. 19. that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to those who are under it: to whom it is alive, who

have as yet no part in Christ, who are not quickened by the spirit of God to an evangelical and spiritual life ? The divine Spirit has a right to use his own law on the consciences of men to manifest their guilt, and the punishment due to their offences; because he is that divine person against whom they have transgressed. But if he do no more, if he leave them under the condemnation of an enlightened conscience only, and shew them not the remedy God has provided in the gospel, can it be inferred because they are legally illuminated, therefore they are pardoned ? Who can suppose there are any sleepy consciences in hell ? At the judgment of the great day will not all be then so convinced of their sins, as in this state we cannot form an idea of ? Yet no man in his senses will say that such will then because self-condemned become pardoned persons. If so, by what authority can any man deny the Lord the Spirit the liberty of fully convincing a sinner of his iniquities, and of the awful consequences thereof, without affording him the least gleam of hope, if he pleased so to do ? Therefore in whom the divine Spirit only so acts, he is in them as the spirit of bondage, and not in the least measure as a spirit of adoption. *Rom. viii. 15.*

Secondly, In the affirmative. It may be inquired, on whom shall the blessings before spoken of be infallibly bestowed ?

To answer this important question, it will be necessary to forego the opinions and sentiments of our fellow men, unless deduced from the word of God, according to its true and proper meaning. Some will conclude on this matter abstracted from, and others in opposition to what the Lord himself declares, governing themselves according to the dictates of a corrupted mind, and unsanctified and polluted affections, determining on truth rather by what is most agreeable to their choice, than being solicitous to avoid error and self-deception. Therefore seeing the judgment of man, unassisted by divine revelation, or uninfluenced by the Spirit of truth, is insufficient to guide us herein, let us with prayer and supplication search that sure word of prophecy, which cannot deceive, *2 Pet. i. 19.* Attend we then to what the master himself declares. *John xvii. 2, 9, 10.* "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them."—From whence it appears that they who are in time to be subjects of gospel blessings, are the gift of the Father, and therefore predestinated from eternity to this glory and happiness. If not, what doth Paul intend by saying, *Rom. viii. 30.*

"Moreover,

“ Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified ? ” But, that we may not mistake his meaning, let us also consider and weigh well the following verses, “ What shall we say to these things ? If God be for us, who shall be against us ? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, (viz. those whom he predestinated) how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Surely every unprejudiced inquirer must acknowledge, that the apostle intends hereby to inculcate the truth before asserted, viz. that as many of the sons and daughters of Adam, who were chosen by the divine Father from everlasting to salvation, shall infallibly be the subjects of the blessings of the gospel in time and to eternity, and that none but they shall be so favored. To judge otherwise is to deny either the freedom of God’s grace, or his divine perfections. For if man through the fall be wholly dead, *Ephes.* ii. 1, 5. free grace can only profit us : assisting grace will be insufficient. But if the grace exercised on the children of men find us entirely undeserv-

ing of the favor of God, and incapable of the least spiritual thought much less action, how came it to pass that that grace should quicken any, who were not chosen from eternity to be the happy subjects of so rich a benefit ? No one can answer this question without denying the Lord's eternity and immutability, which if they do they deny all his other perfections, consequently will commence atheists, not only in practice but principle also.— If then we are among the called, if this privilege be evident unto us, the testimony of this apostle, *2 Tim. i. 9.* will be by us acknowledged to be certain and indubitable, viz. that God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began ; and shall be ready to own with him respecting the ancient Israelites, *Rom. xi. 7.* that the election obtained this grace and that the rest were blinded. Thus have we investigated the etymology of the word gospel ; its scriptural intendment ; explored the great things it contains ; and considered by and for whom they are provided : all which was necessary to prevent misapprehensions touching the ensuing subject, which we shall prosecute in the following chapter.

C H A P. II.

That the Call of the Gospel is properly denominated the Lord's Call, as he himself did promulgate it.

B EING now to make an entrance on the chief subject of the present inquiry, viz., the Gospel Call. Therefore

First, Let us attend to the nature of this call. Here we are to distinguish it from a call to a particular office either in church or state, and also from effectual calling, which is the end designed with reference to God's people, of which the call now to be considered is the mean. As the blessings provided (according to what hath been already observed) are so great, important and necessary, and without a participation of them, we are for ever miserable and wretched, no subject can be more interesting than that which is the instrument appointed by God for the enjoyment of grace so great, and benefits so innumerable and permanent, as those set before us in the treasure of the gospel. This divine treasure is spoken of by our Lord, *Luke* xiv. 16. under the similitude of a supper provided, and the call thereto

thereto is compared to the invitation given to partake thereof, verse 21. We may observe therefore, that our present question is, whether the same be properly denominated

First, God's call.

Secondly, An universal.

Thirdly, A free.

Fourthly, An undeserved.

Fifthly, A merciful.

And sixthly and lastly, A most righteous call.

First, We are to inquire, whether it may be properly denominated God's call. That it deserves this epithet will appear from what is declared concerning it.

First, That the Lord himself did first promulge it.

Secondly, That he hath from the beginning raised up instruments for that purpose.

Thirdly, That he hath engaged still so to do, to qualify, and be with his ministers to the end of time.

First, The Lord himself did primarily publish it, therefore it may with propriety be said to be his call.

call. This appears from *Gen.* iii. 15. in the condemnation of the serpent, wherein he preached the gospel to our fallen parents, gave them to understand that he had purposed to make provision for the redemption both of them and their posterity, fallen in Adam their federal head and representative, and that though his arch enemy satan had gotten an awful advantage, yet the seed of the woman should spoil all his power, and prove victorious over him, and also effectually redeem both by price and power themselves who were then to expect, and such of their posterity as might in future look for redemption and deliverance in this way which he had now revealed. Certainly our first parents were better acquainted with the nature of this first promise than we are informed, for it is said in the 21st verse, that unto Adam also, and to his wife did the Lord make coats of skins and clothed them : from whence we may probably infer, that they sacrificed the creatures with whose skins they were cloathed, in faith on the promised seed ; saw as in a figure the Messiah cut off for their iniquities, and that divine law which they had broken, by him in their behalf magnified and made honorable. Whether this were the case or not respecting the knowledge, and faith of our first parents in relation to the promised seed, yet we are sure it was so with Abel : for it is said touching him, *Gen.* iv. 4, 5. *And the*

Lord

Lord had respect to Abel, and his offering. But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. The cause of which you have unfolded, *Heb. xi. 4.* wherein the inspired writer affirms, that *by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it, he being dead yet speaketh.* This divine testimony sufficiently elucidates the nature of the first promise, that it was not an object simply of reason, no revelation of election, but set forth and propounded to be believed, confided, and trusted in, which Abel through grace was enabled to do, but Cain not ; and it further shews that Abel obtained witness, that he was righteous not before, but after he had offered the sacrifice. Again. The Lord himself did proclaim the gospel to Abraham, as is evident from *Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3.* compared with *Heb. xi. 8, 9, 10.*—“ Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee ; and I will make of thee a great nation ; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” But what doth the author of the above epistle record concerning Abraham ? He says, “ He looked for a city which hath foundations,

whose

whose builder and maker is God." Wherein it is obvious, that by the Lord's command to Abraham, and the promise subsequent upon it, things far superior to those which are of a temporal nature are to be understood, for no one can doubt, who will refer to various parts of the New Testament, relative to Abraham, but that he believed in the promised seed, which was to spring from his loins, and in consequence thereof obeyed God. Finally, the gospel call may be denominated the Lord's, because he himself in our nature did publish it. This is evident from *Luke*, iv. 17, 18, 19. and from innumerable passages of the four Evangelists.

Secondly, That it is the Lord's call, is apparent from the instruments raised up, even from the beginning of time to declare it. For proof of which we may refer to *Gen.* iv. 26. "And to Seth, to him also there was born a Son, and he called his name Enos ; then did men begin to call upon the name of the Lord." Which implies that they professed the truth of God, and separated themselves from the wicked. But that this was done without any ministry or public declaration of God's promise is no wise probable. Enoch is recorded *Gen.* v. 24. to have walked with God, and it is said of him, that he was not, for God took him : from whence it is obvious that he was a saint of peculiar eminence, and according to

Jude 14. 15. not a person of a private but public character, also without all doubt a preacher of the gospel. That Noah was such, we have the testimony of the apostle Peter, 2 Epist. ii. 5. to prove it. Need we instance Abraham, when we are informed of what the Lord declares concerning him, *Gen.* xviii. 19. whose example we may not doubt but was copied both by Isaac and Jacob who lived after ; and though we are ignorant to whom they made known the things, which relate to eternal salvation, beside those who were under their more immediate patronage, yet doubtless to the latter they neglected not instruction, especially in so momentous a concern, as the subject we are now treating. Leaving other instruments beside those already noticed, pass we on to Moses, who not only is styled the lawgiver with respect to the moral, but the ceremonial law also, and therefore must necessarily be an eminent instrument to the above end. No one will question this who attends to the word of inspiration concerning it, *Heb.* x. 1. “ For the law having a shadow of good things to come, &c.” is the testimony of the author of that epistle, which clearly evinces that the ceremonial law was Christ, his redemption, and all the blessings appertaining thereto, veiled under that shadowy dispensation. And what was the administration thereof, but the gospel more obscurely set forth ? Which being by the

the appointment of God uninterruptedly to be obeyed by the whole Jewish nation, even to the coming of the Messiah, there was a constant succession of various ecclesiastic officers, on whom it was incumbent to set forth the salvation of the Messiah, according to that typical appointment.— Certainly as it is now, so it was then in some degree touching the explanation of divine mysteries; and we have no more reason to question but schools and academies subsisted among the Jews from the earliest ages, for the education of youth for sacred offices, in order that the people might be instructed in matters concerning salvation, than we have that such have subsisted since the institution of Christianity. Some information hereof we have, 1 *Sam.* xix. 18. 2 *Kings* ii. 3, 5, 2 *Kings* iv. 23. which is evidently corroborated by the practice of the Jews in the times of our Lord and his apostles, *Luke* ii. 46. *Acts* xix. 9. for it cannot be conjectured that such a practice was then but of modern date. Add to these the extraordinary instruments to the above purpose. What think we of a David, a Solomon, and others? The writings of the two latter evidently prove it. But when we come to peruse the prophecy of Isaiah, we are ready to say that to an uninformed reader with respect to the time in which he wrote, he must appear to have described the Meffiah as come, rather than looked for and expected: a specimen

of his extraordinary perspicuity and minute description in relation to that glorious and divine personage you have in his fifty-third chapter.— Nor are Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the lesser prophets wanting in evident characteristics of so honorable an office: (viz. the publication of the gospel,) which must be plain and obvious to every one solicitous of information. Nay, Daniel in his 9th chapter so describes the time, obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, that it amounts to one of the strongest and most irrefragable arguments in the mouth of a christian against a Jew that can be brought. It would be needless to proceed any further on this head, as every one is informed who can read his Bible, by whom and to what purpose the apostles of our Lord were called and sent forth. Therefore let it be observed as proposed, viz.

Thirdly, That the Lord hath engaged to raise up, qualify, and be with his ministers to the end of time. Had not the Lord so engaged, it would be difficult to say how his kingdom in the world could be maintained. That it is an everlasting kingdom the scriptures are clear in; David speaking thereof under the splendor, majesty, and riches of Solomon as a type, says, *Psalm lxxii. 5, 6, 7.* “They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations:

he shall come down like rain upon the mowen
graſs, as ſhowerſ that water the eſt̄h : in his
days ſhall the righteous flouriſh, and abundance
of peace ſo long as the moon endureth.” Which
we know neither was, nor could be literally true
of Solomon, but muſt relate to the Meſſiah as
Daniel teſtifies, chap. ii. 35. and which innumer-
able ſcriptures in the Old and New Teſtament
conſirm. As then the kingdom of Chriſt ſhall
continue even to the end of time, there is, and
will be a neceſſity of officers and miſtiers therein
until that period : this appears from his commiſſion
to his aþoſtles to preach the goſpel, and diſ-
cipline the naþions, *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.* “ Go ye
therefore and teach all naþions baptiþing them in
the name of the Faþer, and of the Son, and of
the Hoþy Ghost : teaching them to obſerve all
things whatſoever I have com‐manded you. And
lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the
world. Amen.” For the pa‐mife here afforded
cannot be reſtrained to the aþoſtles to whom it
was firſt given, ſeeing they have been long ſince
dead, and the world ſtill continues ; neither has
there been at any time ſince our Lord’s aſcenſion
an’ en‐tire ceſſation of rule and go‐vernment in his
kingdom : if there had his kingdom could not be
ſaid to endure. Therefore ’tis demonstrati‐vely
evident that an uninterrupted ſucceſſion of miſ‐
tiers and officers has continued in his church ſince
that

that time, and without all contradiction will so continue until the final consummation of all things. As then, from what has been observed, it indubitably appears that the call of the gospel is the Lord's call, and that with the utmost propriety, it is to be attributed to him : how doth it behove every one of the human species, to whom it cometh to entertain and regard it as the voice of the Lord speaking to him or her in particular ?— The want of this attention in the sons and daughters of apostate man, is the melancholy and fatal cause of the everlasting and unutterable misery and wretchedness of thousands, yea millions of his unhappy posterity. Alas ! Sin hath so blinded our eyes, that we see not our misery. Melancholy is that disorder of body that renders its subject insensible of its danger ; but how much more so when the person, the subject thereof, becomes pleased and delighted in it, and is influenced thereby to consider himself in health and safety, when all around perceive he is on the verge of eternity. Is there no physician to be procured for such a one ? Undoubtedly there is. Are there no remedies to be applied to a person in these circumstances ? Who will answer in the negative ? Yet were you to consult the patient he would not listen, nay he would grow angry with and tell you, you were disturbers and troublers of his peace and felicity. Is not this the awful

case and circumstance of mankind in general with respect to their souls ? They are sick unto death ; they are on the verge of an eternity, not of happiness, but of unspeakable torment, and yet they esteem themselves well ; are at ease ; think they stand in no need of the physician Christ, or of any spiritual remedy to be administered unto them. Some will say what hath the gospel to do with such ? The Lord in his word speaks not unto, neither doth he call upon such to come unto him for salvation. Were they wounded, and brought to a deep sense of their practical offences, the malignity and turpitude of them ; did they behold the evil of their hearts and natures ; and were such persons become the subjects of the grace of repentance, we would acknowledge, say they, that the gospel did call them, but before this is their case they have nothing to do with Christ : they have no authority to come unto him, nay, it would be an increase of their condemnation so to do : for what else is such a conduct, but making Christ the minister of sin ? In reply to persons of this stamp we answer, that the Lord sees not a natural man one time any more worthy of his grace than at another. Though the stony heart be broken into ten thousand pieces by the law, every part thereof retains its lapideous nature still ; consequently whatever the conduct of such a person may be, whether licentious or moral, yet

yet he is prompted not from love to God but from a regard to self, preferring this idol to the Lord even in the whole of his moral conduct, which is only a diversification of the agency of this unhappy principle, which immediately took place on our apostacy in Adam, viz. a setting up of it in the heart in the room of him who created us, and paying that homage to this idol, that is only due to our supreme Lord, sovereign, and benefactor. True it is that the difference is great between a licentious and moral conduct in the natural man. Many are the temporal benefits resulting from a religious and civil behavior, and it would be a matter for which we never could be sufficiently thankful, if the whole world of rational beings were so disposed. Nay, we may proceed further and affirm, that the unconverted moralist, who opposes not the truth of God, incurs not that degree of divine wrath, which the licentious person does ; yet to say his estate is better, that he is one jot more in the favor of God than the latter, is certainly a mistake, and unquestionably contradicts the oracles of truth. Wherefore we conclude, that the use of the law in the hand of the divine spirit, is not at present calculated to produce some good thing in the heart of a natural man, whereby or on account of which gospel grace may be bestowed, but rather that he may be so awakened to his misery and danger, as to see the necessity of attending

attending to God's call in the gospel, and the jeopardy he is in if he obey it not. Therefore, that which may be repentance in the natural heart springs from self love, and though it may answer many valuable purposes, yet the man, the subject of it remains wholly flesh, of the disposition whereof the apostle Paul hath informed us, *Rom. viii. 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

C H A P. III.

The Gospel Call is universal and unlimited.

HAVING shewn in the preceding chapter, that the word of salvation may be denominated God's call, as he himself hath published it, and hath, and doth continue to raise up instruments to that purpose, we are next to inquire whether it be an universal and unlimited call.— In reply hereto let it be observed, That

First, It is not limited in the scriptures of truth.

Secondly, All thereby are invited to the gospel feast.

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First, The gospel call is not in sacred writ limited. Indeed it was so under the Mosaic or legal dispensation, but this limitation was rather accidental than that any were excluded, who were willing to embrace salvation in the way God then ordained. It hath been observed already that the gospel before the coming of Christ, was preached to the Jews in types and figures, which were adumbrations of that redemption, which the Son of God should effect in the fulness of time, in the behalf of his people ; and though this divine economy was confined to the Jewish nation, yet no stranger was prohibited from dwelling among or incorporating with them, as appears from *Exod. xii. 48.* Indeed there is a very great difference between that and the present dispensation, inasmuch as it is not only lawful but laudable to carry the gospel even into the most distant and savage nations ; but respecting the former, the means of salvation were confined to that single people, as the apostle Paul testifies, *Rom. xi. 4.—To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises.* Yet, as we have already noticed, strangers were not excluded from a participation of those invaluable privileges. If then the case thus stood under the Old, can any one suppose the New Testament dispensation is more contracted ? Let us hear the great apostle of the Gentiles on this point.—

1 Tim. i. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. If any one can find herein a limitation to the gospel call, he must have the eyes of an Argus ; for if it be worthy of all acceptation, doubtless it is deserving the acceptance of every sinner : and though many such may be too careless or too proud to accept it, yet it follows not but this and many other portions of God's word call upon them to that purpose.— What doth the same apostle say to the idolatrous Athenians ? Why he tells them, *Acts xii. 30. The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent,* (or change their minds, or to be wise again, as the original word signifies.) Compare this passage with *John xx. 31. But these things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.* Who can say after duly pondering these scriptures that any individual is unconcerned herein, to whom the letter of the word is revealed ; though one and another may say with the many who were bidden to the marriage, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it, or I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused : yet can they affirm they were not bidden ? If not, how then is the gospel call contracted ? On the contrary

Secondly, All thereby are invited to the gospel feast. This appears from *Luke* xiv. 21.—“ Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.”—What doth this intend but the dispersed Jews and Gentile proselytes, to whom the gospel message was sent, after the scribes and pharisees had rejected it ? And as if this glorious invitation appeared not yet sufficiently extensive, it is added, verse the 23d, “ Go out into the high ways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Obviously signifying, that it was the divine purpose, that the gospel should not be sent only to the Jews, *Acts* xiii. 26. but to the Gentiles also, verse 46—50. These passages last quoted, although they also prove the universality of this divine message, yet declare by the eve it that though many be thus called, yet few are chosen. Now to this doctrine very few will subscribe. Some will object, that it cannot be, seeing Christ himself invited not the self-righteous, but the weary and heavy laden only. *Matt.* xi. 28. Indeed by this scripture it doth not appear that he invited any other, nevertheless it cannot thence be inferred, that all others were forbidden. It appears from *1 John* iii. 23. compared with chap. v. 13. that the command of God

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to his believing people is, that they should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another. Will any one say from thence, they who have not already believed, or manifested any love to the brethren, may do as they please: the preaching of the gospel is not obligatory on them, it relates not to such, neither is it possible for persons unconverted to embrace the divine witness? If observations of this kind be conclusive, what construction may we put on verses 11 and 12.—“ He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Is the meaning hereof, he that hath already believed, yet doth not now believe hath made him a liar? But the expression is not doth, but hath made him a liar, and appears to respect not those who are in a state of faith, but them who are void of this grace; besides the grace of God in the hearts of his people, prevented not by natural obstructions, never suspends its operations totally, but only may be as natural life in a man under a fit of apoplexy, in whom though there be no external, yet are there some internal indications thereof. If this therefore be not the meaning of this passage, may we suppose the intendment to be as follows? viz. he that believeth not that God hath given to his people

people eternal life, hath made him a liar. But how doth this exposition correspond with the 13th verse?—"These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."—May not the following questions be put to such who think it to be genuine? Was Balaam a good man, because he believed the children of Israel were God's chosen? Will the belief that the gift of eternal life was bestowed on the apostles and ancient saints, or that God's people at present are so favored, argue the person so believing to have the witness in himself? For so the context runs—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself;" and such as have the witness in themselves are believers, and are said in verse the 13th quoted above, to have eternal life. But if neither of the above constructions are, or can be the genuine interpretation of this part of sacred writ, may we conclude that the sixth verse is the key thereunto? The apostle in the verse preceding asks the following important question: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" That is, that hath so overcome the world, as neither by its frowns, or smiles, to be alienated, either in heart or life from God. Can any such be found but they who so cordially believe that Christ is the Messiah, as to believe on him for saving purposes?

poses? Then he adds in the sixth verse, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." As much as if the apostle had said, this is the consecrated and appointed Savior of mankind, commissioned by his divine Father, as testified at his baptism, *Matt.* iii. 16. as also by water and blood coming forth from his pierced side at his crucifixion, denoting symbolically the purification he brought in, both from the defilement and guilt of sin, according to the types of the legal washings with water and blood; whose mediatorial character was afterwards attested by the Holy Spirit, both in his miraculous and saving operations: of similar purport are the two following verses, declaring the divine testimony both in heaven and on earth to the mission, authority and sufficiency of Christ as a mediator between an infinitely holy and righteous, but offended God, and guilty, sinful, and wretched men; declaring in the subsequent verses, that all or any who come to, and embrace the Savior by faith, in consequence of this divine testimony, they as the immediate fruits and effects of such a faith, possess through the operations of the Holy Spirit, the divine witness within them. But they that come not to Christ for salvation, and do not trust in him for that purpose, make God a liar, either

either with respect to the divine testimony concerning the mission, authority, dignity, or sufficiency of Christ to save ; or in relation to the sacred promises of acceptance through him. From all which it may irrefragably be deduced, that if they who hear the gospel, and come not unto Christ, reject the divine testimony, and are guilty of the sin of making God a liar, the imputation of this sin unto them for the above neglect, necessarily implies that the gospel call is unlimited, and excepts none who fit under its sound, whether they can believe it or not. To say that any among whom the gospel is preached are prohibited from embracing it, is not of the same import as to say they cannot. 'Tis one thing to aver that a man is forbidden to embrace the salvation set forth, and another to declare he will not accept it. Sure it is that the hardened sinner, the self-righteous pharisee will not come to Jesus ; but doth it follow from thence that they are not invited, and that their guilt is not abundantly more aggravated by their refusal ? To distinguish aright in this matter is of great importance to the awakened soul. Are not the impediments in the way of such built entirely on a supposition they are not invited ? Could they repent ; could they be truly sorry for their sins, and demonstrate it by their conduct, they then could believe the gospel message was to them. If such be told, that they are

are not to be accepted for any work, either that they have done or may do, yet they will presently conclude that tidings so great and glorious as the gospel contains, are only sent to those who believe, but as for their part they cannot. If they were so happy as to be the subjects of this grace, they then might hesitate no longer, but embrace the gospel declaration without delay ; but instead thereof they have no faith, and therefore cannot be the persons whom the Lord calls to partake of blessings so inestimable and precious. All this evidently manifests that it is natural to the human heart to seek for some worthiness or qualification, either from ourselves or the Lord, in order to embrace the message of his gospel ; but if we be doctrinally persuaded, that the call thereof is not to all, immediately the heart is shut against it, concluding we are the persons who are excluded, therefore cannot embrace it as a free salvation judging we are not rightly circumstanced to accept it. Whether this be not of great moment who can doubt ? Is it not so to the real christian, both in temptation and on a dying bed ? Are such sure, that when in those circumstances their evidences will be clear ? Suppose they are not, tell them then that the Lord's call is limited, what is the consequence ? You stab them to the vitals, you cut off all hope, evidences they have none, and therefore they see no way for trust or expectation.

tion. But on the contrary, if the gospel call be universal, certainly it is free, or gracious. The freedom and universality of the gospel message must stand or fall together: if the latter be denied, the former is rejected. This assertion is just, as will appear from the following considerations.

First, That God's electing grace is not manifested to the objects thereof, before the gospel message be embraced.

Secondly, God's people are not of one particular character in their natural state; but as variously circumstanced, and as differently inclined as the non-elect.

Thirdly, That the law of God as much disapproves of them, previous to their effectual calling, as it doth of others.

Fourthly, Conscience properly enlightened hesitates not to reprove them, more than it doth the reprobate, who are the subjects of the like illumination.

And fifthly, That no man dare say, he is reprobated, who hath not committed the unpardonable sin.

First, That God's electing grace is not manifested to the objects thereof before the gospel message

message be embraced is obvious; because it is the only method God hath appointed to save sinners. Were not all the sons and daughters of Adam equally fallen in him their first head, one might have a better ground of hope than another; but if all bring the same corrupted nature into the world, and are equally involved in the guilt of his first transgression, by what argument can any of the human species prove that he hath an interest in the Lord's everlasting and electing love (considering himself only as one of the fallen offspring of a degenerate root) more than an inhabitant of the wilds of America, or a native of the Mogull empire. 'Tis true it may be known by effectual calling, *Rom.* viii. 30. *Moreover, whom he did pre-destinate, them he also called:* but who will assert, that this special calling cometh through the moral law? Doth not Paul, or rather the eternal Spirit of truth by him declare, *Rom.* iii. 20. by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God? But if they be of the law who are not justified, they certainly are not called, and consequently such cannot know they are elected; or have the least hope concerning it, but through another dispensation, to which they are yet strangers respecting any divine operation it hath had hitherto upon them. Therefore it will follow, that unless the grace, which cometh by the gospel, be communicated in a sovereign way and manner

without the gospel, the elect of God cannot know their election before they embrace its message; and to do so they certainly have no warrant, unless the Lord's call be to all that hear or read it.— That they cannot know their election before they embrace the gospel message appears from *Rom. x. 13, 14, &c.* “ Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ” Seeing then the gospel call must be believed and embraced, ere a man can possess the blessings it sets forth and displays, no one though elected can say he is warranted to believe it, unless he knows his election, or is persuaded this divine call extends to all who hear it. If he be not persuaded, either of his election, or of the universality of the gospel call, he supposes some legal righteousness whereby he differs from others (though not by nature, yet by practice) gives him such an authority, which supposition evidently contradicts the following passages, *Gal. v. 3, 4, 5. Rom. ix. 31.* which declare such a one cannot esteem the call here treated of to be free and gracious.

Secondly,

Secondly, God's chosen people are not in their natural state of one particular character, but are as variously circumstanced, and differently inclined as the non-elect.

If we consult scripture testimony we shall soon acknowledge this truth. Paul without the least doubt was a self-righteous person of the first rank, *Phil.* iii. 4, 5. The young man in the gospel appears to be of a similar stamp, yet have we no reason to believe he was called by grace, *Mark* ix. 20. to the 31st verse. Mary Magdalen a peculiar character of licentiousness and impurity chosen from everlasting as a vessel of mercy, *Mark* xvi. 9. *Luke* vii. 47. but we have no reason to conclude so concerning the daughter of Herodias *Matt.* xiv. and beginning. Zaccheus we are told by the Lord himself was a son of Abraham, and therefore salvation was come to his house, *Luke* xix. 9. but our Lord does not so affirm concerning all other publicans; and that he might for ever destroy, or at least silence the vain pretensions of the human heart, (to which it is natural to hope for salvation on the bottom of some legal righteousness, either internal or external) he without reserve assures the pharisees then present, *Matt.* xxi. 31. that publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before them. If therefore we suppose one natural man is more likely to be of the election

tion of grace than another, we certainly have no warrant to say it is the self-righteous ; and if any will affirm it is the licentious, let such take heed lest they think lightly of sin, instead of esteeming it, as it really is, diametrically opposite to the infinite purity of an holy and just God. Hence then let such acknowledge their ignorance, and confess that his everlasting love is, and will be, ever a secret, even to the objects thereof, until the evidences of effectual calling declare it, *2 Pet. i. 3*, to verse 11. which is not manifested by the law, or any legal performances for the procurement of the divine favor ; but by the power of the Spirit's grace through the revelation and promise of the gospel. For as the apostle speaks to the believing *Hebrews*, chap. xii. 18. to the 21st verse, “ Ye are not come unto the mount, that might be touched, and that burned with fire ; nor unto blackness and darkness, and tempest and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words : but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, verse 24, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” So it may be said to every true christian at the present time. Now then neither self-righteousness nor licentiousness characterize God's elect before calling, nor do any

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natural dispositions, by which one differs from another : 'its not boldness, or timidity ; warmth or meekness ; wisdom, or folly ; prudence, or rashness, which flow from a natural constitution discover the great mystery. Doth not experience shew that some that are of those different tempers have been made partakers of Christ, and truly fear the Lord, whilst multitudes respectively peculiar for these several characters, are totally ignorant of the most interesting truths of the gospel, and apparently have not the fear of God before their eyes ? What boldnes in a Luther ! Timidity in a Melancthon ! Yet both appointed by God as chosen vessels of mercy, and likewise remarkable instruments to manifest the exceeding riches of his grace. And though these instances were in times past, yet as it was then without doubt it is still the same now. If then neither self-righteousness, libertinism, nor any natural temper can or ought to give any man the least hope respecting his salvation ; is it not manifest that the gospel call is to every one to whom it comes ? If not, no individual hath a right to accept it, and therefore instead of its being free, it will be quite the contrary.

Thirdly, The law of God disapproves as much of the elect themselves, previous to their effectual calling, as it doth of others.

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What one man will necessarily and unavoidably be with respect to heart and life, without the operations of the divine Spirit, through the law on his conscience, so will another. Whatever legal repentings may be effected in one, by the same divine agent there may be the same effect produced in another. Can the law know any difference, but according to the effects brought forth? True it is, it will approve or disapprove suitable to the harmony or dissonancy to or from itself of the acts produced, either in heart or life, be the agent who he may. This can only be said respecting acts materially considered, but the root from whence they more remotely, and the motives from which they more immediately spring, the divine law cannot justify either in whole or in part, so as to denominate the subject or his acts pleasing to God. For it requires first a full satisfaction for sin already committed; that original purity of nature which Adam before his fall possessed, and we in him, as the root of all our thoughts, affections, inclinations, words and actions: and therefore will not, nor cannot look with a favorable aspect, either upon us, or our actions, so as to give us the least expectation of the divine favor: it is not within its sphere, yet nevertheless if its Lord and sovereign be pleased to accept of a surety, who will fully satisfy for all the debts incurred unto, and amply fulfil all the requirements which divine

divine justice demands, it will be contented ; yet will not the law seek any such surety, keeping its eye constantly upon the sinner, the voice thereof is pay me what thou owest. Here we may take notice of a difficulty that arises, which is, if the Lord from eternity chose his people in Christ Jesus, and he in the eternal covenant became their surety, how can they in the divine sight be considered under the law in time, if his suretiship was accepted for them ? In answer to which it may be observed, that they are openly and manifestatively under the law, sin, and guilt, and all the consequences of the breach of the first covenant in Adam. And though in the divine mind the threatenings and denunciations of the law are superseded, yet cannot his people be justified individually, until what is secret with the Lord is openly declared, which, were it possible to be prevented, the law would not be appeased, but with their everlasting destruction. The law of God cannot but justify the people of God collectively considered, seeing it has long been declared that for them Christ engaged, was given in promise, published in types, foretold of in prophecy, at length was incarnate, and finally was offered. Moreover as Truth itself has affirmed, that when the Lord died, rose, and ascended, his people died, rose, and ascended, the divine law can have nothing to say against them so considered, seeing

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what was foretold in prophecy has been fulfilled, *Isaiah xlvi. 21.* *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, he will magnify the law, and make it honorable.* Yet whether there be any open declaration respecting each individual previous to that proclaimed in the court of conscience, is a point dubious and obscure: that there is not seems to be confirmed by *Luke xv. 7.* *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* Also by *1 Pet. i. 12.* “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” It appearing from these passages of divine truth, that what the angels are acquainted with relative to God’s people in time, they learn from the things transacted on earth: therefore it is very probable, that the first declaration of God, that this, or that individual is just, through the merits of Christ, is made in the souls of his people by his Spirit. However that they were before this secretly the objects of his love, and that the Lord did regard them as those for whom the Lord Jesus was to satisfy, and in the fulness of time did indeed satisfy divine justice in the behalf of, cannot well be questioned: yet this will not authorize any one to say he was eternally justified, as the word *justify* signifies

signifies—a being declared just in open court.— According to this view of things, the law will not retract the least jot of its demands and requirements, until it receives a mandate from an higher court, and in what way this is received, if not by the gospel made effectual, by being brought home by the Spirit to the heart who can tell? Therefore the gospel call must be universal if it be free, seeing the law can afford no assistance either in a way of worthiness or meetness. But it may, notwithstanding all that hath been said, be demanded, what do the many portions of God's word concerning repentance intend, if there can be found no gracious act without the gospel? Or at least doth not the Lord require every one to repent, ere they be authorised to embrace Christ? In order to obviate this difficulty let us consider the several more important passages of God's word of this sort; previous to which it would be necessary to weigh

First, What repentance implies.

Secondly, What source we may suppose it arises from.

Thirdly, What kinds of repentance the word of God records.

First, What doth repentance imply?

Certainly it supposes the subject thereof either expects pardon for his past offences, or endeavors earnestly to avoid an increase of misery. That the law knows any thing of the former, is not difficult to determine. It is not an whole life of sorrow and amendment can atone for one single offence ; nay, could we, being entire strangers to the gospel, repent with all that purity of love to God, that the grace of the gospel produces, yet would it not make satisfaction for the least of our past transgressions : but when we consider, that this is impossible, and that all legal repentance can have no higher a motive than self love, how can compensation be made to justice for the least iniquity past, by that act which in its principle is a violation of the very essence of that law, to which we stand obliged ? Are we not enjoined to love the Lord above ourselves ? If so, no legal repentance can be satisfactory. That man as a rational creature, conscious of having run deeply in debt to divine justice, and convinced that the Lord will inflict on him the full demerit of his crimes and offences, may repent through fear all will allow : but surely such a one can with propriety only promise himself thereby an avoidance of accumulating that guilt, which would be the necessary consequence of an unbridled and unconstrained behaviour. But where is the man that can even command this ? For suppose him stripped

ped of all his self righteous pretensions to future salvation and blessedness, and fully persuaded that he is without all hope of eternal felicity, such is the corrupt disposition in the soul of every one, that he would lose all patience, and that enmity to God which before lay dormant would begin to stir and rage against him: therefore 'tis evident, some false hope must support the legal penitent, though it may be very dark and uncertain.

Secondly, What source may we suppose repentance arises from.

That true repentance, such as God regards, springs from his grace is indubitable, if we compare the 23d and 24th verses of the third chapter to the Romans together. Evident therefore is it that as grace is the source, the gospel by which this grace is conveyed must be the means. Nay, all repentance toward God springs either from a true and spiritual perception of the gospel, or from a false and delusive apprehension thereof; what arises from the former may justly be denominated a repentance, which needeth not to be repented of; and the fruit of the latter (though the gospel be the occasion thereof) cannot but be a legal repentance, and may be so called, inasmuch as it arises from an entertainment of the gospel, through the constraint of the law in the conscience, but not rightly received for want of spiritual light,

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the subject being still under the law, he cannot repent but as one in that condition, for as the state is so will the repentance be. Therefore in

The third place let us inquire, What kinds of repentance the word of God records.

To inform ourselves hereof, we need take but little trouble, because the apostle having in one portion of scripture made this grand distinction of repentance into true and false, viz. *2 Cor. vii. 10.* thereby shewing that the former is from the grace of God in Christ apprehended by the power of the Spirit through the gospel; and that the latter, as it hath no such source, is insufficient to evidence the subject thereof to be in the divine favor; and also that it will not at last terminate in everlasting felicity, whatever may be the motives thereto, viz. the welfare of the person either in soul or body, here or hereafter. This being conclusive, we come therefore to what was proposed, viz.

To consider some more striking portions of God's word relative thereto.

The learned have made much noise concerning the original words expressive of repentance, and divide the same into *metaphēsis* and *metázoē*: the first answering to **מְתַעַּד** in the Hebrew, and the latter

to בְּשָׁרֶשׁ which signifies he was converted, or rather to בְּשָׁוָה translated *conversio, penitentia, reversio, responsio*, but as it plainly appears that the former is sometimes used with relation to an evangelical repentance, by the sacred penmen, it is unwarrantable to build any points of doctrine merely on the words; nevertheless, whoever will scrutinize into the original of the Old and New Testament, will find that the latter is almost used constantly to express a gracious and thorough change of the soul, and that the former is but rarely chosen for that purpose.

The word repentance is used with respect to the Lord's people in a state of grace, 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10. Also in relation to churches before approved of by Christ, though in some things reprehensible, Rev. ii. 5. iii. 3, 19. This affects not the matter in hand. In other places it is so used as apparently doth not imply the posteriority of faith, and consequently cannot be inferred to exist without the gospel, as *Mark* vi. 12. *Luke* xiii. 3. being excitements to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and the salvation he was to accomplish: this appears by comparing *Mark* i. 4. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." Also *Luke* iii. 3. *Acts* xiii. 24. with *Acts* xix. 4. "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, faying

saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." For it cannot be supposed that the nature of John's baptism was such as not to require faith; but rather such faith from whence true repentance immediately flows. According to most expositors *Mark* i. 15. repent, and believe the gospel, relates to the change of the dispensation: of this sentiment is *Grotius*, and many of his contemporaries. *Dr. Guyse* thus paraphrases:—" The Jewish rites are soon to cease, and a spiritual and holy kingdom is to be set up: according therefore to the design, and by the grace of this kingdom, which can never be moved, repent of your violations of God's law, and of all false confidences in yourself, and embrace the blessed doctrine of salvation, by believing in me as made known therein, for the remission of your sins and obtaining eternal life." *Dr. Gill's* exposition of this place is as follows:—" He called them to repent, not only of their former sins, but of their bad principles and tenets; concerning a temporal kingdom of the Messiah, concerning merit, and free will, justification by the works of the law, and salvation by their obedience to the ceremonics of it, and the traditions of their elders: these he exhorts them to change their sentiments about, and to relinquish them, and to give into the gospel scheme, which proclaims liberty from the law, " peace,

“ peace, pardon, and righteousness by Christ,
 “ and salvation and eternal life by the free grace
 “ of God.” *Cameron* the great reformer in France
 taking the word repent in this passage to import a
 gracious disposition God-ward, the product of an
 unfeigned love, observes, that though in many
 places in sacred scripture it is put prior to faith,
 as if it were the source thereof, declares, that it
 amounts to no more, than if any one should ex-
 hort another to take care of his health, afterward
 subjoins, confide in, or believe the physician, in-
 tending that the way to recover health was first to
 apply to the doctor, his words are as follow.—

“ *Cum resipiscientia boni aliquid fidem precedere, adeoque*
 “ *cujus fides causa minime sit. Verum etsi priore loco*
 “ *resipiscientiam fide esse priorem: nam sœpenumero fit*
 “ *ut inter loquendum finem modo finis præponamus, et*
 “ *consequens antecedenti; veluti si quis dicat, cura ut*
 “ *valeas; et crede Medico, cum tamen medico an te*
 “ *fidere oporteat, ut sanitatem et præsianam valetudinem*
 “ *recuperemus.*” What hath been observed on the

scripture last quoted, will serve as a comment on
 the passages following, viz. *Matt. iii. 2. iv. 17.*—

Act. xvii. 30. xxvi. 20. Nevertheless if it be still
 alledged, that repentance is by these portions of
 God’s word intended as a prerequisite to faith, and
 that the repentance therein spoken of, is the fruit
 and effect of special grace, though it hath not the
 gospel for its object, but the law; it is answered,

it cannot be evinced to be of any avail, even to the subject possessing this grace, unless suitable fruits attend it, which if maintained, then is a man saved by the law, and not by the gospel, by works, and not by Christ. That the fruits are necessary to evidence its reality will appear from *Matt.* iii. 8. *Luke* iii. 8. and *Acts* xxvi. 20. Indeed our Lord says, *Matt.* ix. 13. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ;" (similar thereto are *Mark* ii. 17. and *Luke* v. 32.) on which *Dr. Gill* judiciously remarks, that the occasion thereof is contained in the eleventh verse of the same chapter.—" And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your master with publicans and sinners."—Verses 12th and 13th. " But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that be whole need not a physician but they that are sick, but go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call, &c." From whence it appears that the above scripture relates to the internal, as well as the external call of the gospel, seeing that he the divine publisher thereof had power both to preach, and render that preaching effectual. The Doctor's exposition is, viz.—" The persons called to this are not the " righteous ; meaning either such who are really " so, because these are already called to it, though " whilst in a state of imperfection, daily need the " exercise

" exercise of this grace ; or rather such who are
 " so in their own opinion, and in the sight of men
 " only, not in the sight of God, which was the
 " case of the scribes and pharisees, and very few
 " of these were called and brought to repen-
 " tance ; but sinners, even the worst, and chief
 " of sinners, who as they stand in need of this
 " grace, and when thoroughly convinced, see
 " they do ; so Christ came into this world as a
 " prophet and minister of the word, to call them
 " to it : which call of his does not suppose they
 " had power to repent of themselves, for this man
 " has not, he is naturally blind, and does not
 " see sin ; his heart is hard, and obdurate, and
 " 'till his eyes are opened, and his stony heart
 " taken away by a superior power to his own,
 " he will never repent ; though he may have
 " space, yet if he has not grace given him, he
 " will remain impenitent. No means will bring
 " him to it of themselves ; neither the most severe
 " judgments, nor the greatest kindnesses, nor
 " the most powerful ministry ; repentance is en-
 " tirely a free gift ; nor does the call of Christ
 " imply the contrary ; which may be considered
 " either as external, as a preacher of the word,
 " and as such was not always attended to and ef-
 " fectual, but often slighted and rejected ; or as
 " internal, being by the power of his grace ef-
 " fectual ; for he who called to repentance, as a

" minister of the word, as a prince and a savior,
 " was able to give it ; and which none but a di-
 " vine person is able to do. Now since this was the
 " end of his coming into the world, his conduct
 " in conversing with publicans and sinners was in
 " all respects highly to be justified." Taking this
 portion of divine writ in the view now set forth,
 it cannot be produced as an authority to limit the
 gospel call: for wherein lies the difference between
 the pharisee and publican if both be so whole in
 their own eyes, as to reject the remedy? But that
 this was, and still is the case we have no room to
 doubt. Are we not divinely informed that the
 Son of God came unto his own, and his own re-
 ceived him not? *John i. 11.* and doth not the
 prophet Isaiah cry out, chap. liii. 1. *Who hath be-*
lieved our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord
revealed? If this be a fact, it is beyond all con-
 troversy that the gospel call, testimony or witness,
 is obligatory on all who providentially are, though
 not spiritually, yet in a rational way, acquainted
 therewith. And as repentance is the manifesta-
 tion, fruit, and effect of an holy principle, yea
 as it is a turning from an hatred to a love of God ;
 from an aversion to the commands, institutions,
 and people of God, to a delight and complacency in
 them ; the gospel then calls on sinners, dead in
 their sins and trespasses, which voice they will
 hear, when the law through the Spirit has done
 its

its office on their conscience to return to God, by faith in the atonement and righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, as to a most loving Father, for all that grace necessary to produce such a repentance, provided that the same divine agent before spoken of, as a spirit of faith, attend his own call with power unto the heart. This is clear from the 12th and 13th verses following. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” And for a further proof, that this call without the energy of the divine Spirit will be ineffectual, add to the above what Truth itself declares, *Matt. xx. 16. Many be called but few chosen.* Repentance, as expressed in *Luke xv. 7.* is not to be considered prior to faith, as mentioned in *2 Tim. ii. 25.* “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” *Beza* expounds thus:—“The true knowledge of the true God in the gospel, distinguished from that which is natural.” Observe *Dr. Guyse* on the place:—“In hope (says he) that God may in due season convince them of their error, and bring them to a sense of the evil and danger of persisting in it, and at length relinquish it, and embrace and boldly profess ‘the

“ the truth as it is in Jesus.” To which we may add a change from spiritual darkness and death to a spiritual perception of the truth in the gospel, that is, such as is productive of all those vital acts peculiar to the Lord’s own people. *Beza’s* observation and comment on *Luke* xxiv. 47. appears without exception: the repentance and remission here expressed, says he, is “ A repentance and “ remission in consequence of Christ speaking in “ the gospel, and manifesting himself savingly; “ for as he is in name so is he in reality.” To which scripture *Acts* v. 31. is not dissimilar.— After Peter had recited his entrance amongst the Gentiles, the occasion and by what authority he went unto them, then the brethren who were of the circumcision hearing these things cried out saying, *Acts* xi. 18. “ Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,” that is, a living repentance, or what evidences spiritual life. For *Dr. Gill* on this place well observes, “ It is “ not by repentance that men live spiritually, but “ by faith in Christ Jesus, though true repentance “ is an evidence of spiritual life, and begins with “ it.” The following scripture relating to the point in hand appears rather more intricate. *Acts* xx. 21. “ Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:” if by repentance be intended a purpose of moral amendment

amendment through love ; for this passage seems to be a description of the order of the apostle's ministry. *Dr. Gill* observes on this part of God's word, viz. " Repentance toward God, and faith " toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The former of " these is not a legal repentance, but an evangelical one, which flows from a sense of the love " of God, and an application of pardoning grace " and mercy, and is always attended with hope, " at least of interest in it, and as here with faith " in Christ Jesus. It lies in a true fight and sense " of sin as exceeding sinful, being contrary to the " nature and law of God, and a deformation of " the image of God in man, as well as followed " with dreadful and pernicious consequences ; " and in a godly sorrow for it, as it is committed " against a God of infinite purity and holiness, " and of love, grace and mercy, and it shows " itself in shame for sin, and blushing at it, and " in an ingenuous confession of it, and forsaking " it : and the latter of these is not an historical " faith, or an assent of the mind to whatsoever " is true concerning the person, office, and grace " of Christ ; but it is a spiritual act of the soul " upon him ; it is a looking and going out to " him, a laying hold and leaning on him, and " trusting in him for grace, righteousness, peace, " pardon, life, and salvation. Now these two " were the sum of the apostle's ministry ; this is

“ a breviary or compendium of it ; a form of
 “ sound words held fast and published by him.”
 By these observations it is clear, that by repent-
 ance here expressed the Doctor intended a repent-
 ance which is evangelical and not legal, which
 springs from some degree or measure of true faith,
 and does not precede or go before it, and having
 shewn the nature of the apostle’s ministry he sub-
 joins “ And as these two go together as doctrines
 “ in the ministry of the word, they go together in
 “ the experience of the saints, where the one is
 “ there the other is, they are wrought in the soul
 “ at one and the same time, by one and the same
 “ hand; the one is not before the other in order of
 “ time, however it may be in order of working, or as
 “ to visible observation; repentance is mentioned
 “ before faith, not that it precedes it, though it
 “ may be discerned in its outward acts before it ;
 “ yet faith, as to its inward exercise on Christ, is
 “ full as early, if not earlier ; souls first look to
 “ Christ by faith, and then they mourn in tears
 “ of evangelical repentance, *Zech.* xii. 10. though
 “ the order of the gospel ministry is very fitly here
 “ expressed, which is first to lay before sinners
 “ the evil of sin, and their danger by it, in order
 “ to convince of it, and bring to repentance for
 “ it ; and then to direct and encourage them to
 “ faith in Christ Jesus, as in the case of the goaler,
 “ *Acts* xvi. 29, 30.” What the Doctor here in-
 tends

tends by repentance (unless legal repentance) is uncertain : if no knowledge of the gospel, which is true and genuine, preceded, how is it evangelical ? If these did, then the faith here mentioned probably intends the faith of evidence. He adds
 " And this is generally speaking, the order and
 " method in which the holy Spirit proceeds, he
 " is first a spirit of conviction and illumination,
 " he shews to souls the exceeding sinfulness of sin,
 " causes them to lothe it, and themselves for it,
 " and humbles them under a sense of it : and then
 " he is a spirit of faith, he reveals Christ unto
 " them as God's way of salvation, and works faith
 " in them to believe in him." If by the illumination here intended be such, as in its nature is something more than legal; provided we refer to the former part of this exposition, and compare it with the latter, we may conclude the meaning of the Doctor in the words following, viz.—
 " By revealing Christ unto them as God's way of
 " salvation, and working faith in them to believe
 " in him," to be, a clearer revelation, and a greater degree of faith, than aforementioned.—
Beza's exposition seems to vary ; he says, " By
 " repentance here is intended the whole of true
 " conversion unto God, and by faith in Jesus
 " Christ, Christ the material, and faith the in-
 " strumental cause of salvation." Whatever be the real, true, and genuine meaning of this pas-

Page, 'tis hard to conceive that the apostle preached to the Jews, or to the heathen nations the doctrine of repentance toward God, without giving some proper encouragement thereunto. It appears that in this our fallen state, all amendment springs from hope of mercy in the Divine Being either true or false, which scripture example corroborates, *Jer. ii. 25. There is no hope. No: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* Now to imagine the apostle would doctrinally propose a false foundation is inexcusable, seeing a presumptuous hope is as dishonorable to God, as to be without any : for if the latter be a denial of his mercy, the former is a rejection of his truth, holiness and justice. Scripture testimony informs us *Job viii. 13.* that the hypocrites hope shall perish, therefore to suppose that a repentance which arises from an hope not truly founded on a Savior revealed in the gospel should be manifestative of special grace, is to deny our Lord's own declaration, *John xiv. 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*—Indeed a well authenticated information of divine mercy to be obtained, obliges to repentance ; calls upon the children of men to stop in the career of their sins and transgressions : but though it so doth it will never have a genuine effect upon them, until the way wherein it is shewn is spiritually perceived and embraced. Every thing short

Short of this engenders a false expectation which consequent on the legal convictions of the divine Spirit, will set and prompt a man to work, repent, and turn (though not truly but in imagination) to God, until he find through the further illumination of that divine agent, that his hope is groundless, and his expectations are delusive ; which will be immediately succeeded by despair, if the Lord through gospel grace do not appear : therefore without doubt in the scripture passage now considered the repentance there spoken of, if evangelical must be viewed as the end ; and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, the way to that end, unless it be reckoned equivalent to regeneration ; or a change of mind from the Jewish dispensation in relation to the Jews, or from the pagan religion and worship in reference to the Gentiles. Several other parts of God's word treat of repentance, but as those which have been already observed are the chief, we will omit them. That wherein the repentance of Judas is recorded, serves to prove that the source thereof was not from a conscience purified, but only alarmed ; and that which records the repentance of Esau shews not his repentance to relate to the soul, and the things of another life, but to those of time only. The following passages, viz. *Psalm* xxxiv. 18. li. 17. and *Isaiah* lxvi. 2. appear to be of the same import with *Matt.* v. 3. and consequently imply the sub-

jects of the contrition therein observed to be endued with grace, and therefore with real faith in some small degree, though they themselves might judge otherwise : for it is not the perception of the inhabitation of this grace which alone characterizes the true christian, but the possession thereof, whether discerned by him or not. With respect to *Isai.* iv. 7. let it be compared with *Jer.* xxxi. 19. as also *John* xiv. 6. and whatever difficulty may be conceived therein will disappear, especially if what some have thought be true, viz. that it was prophetic of the conversion of the three thousand by Peter's sermon, *Act*sii. 41. Having finished this inquiry concerning evangelical repentance, it remains to be investigated whether a legal one be not absolutely necessary previous to a belief on Christ through the gospel. Touching this point we may observe, that it gives no title, neither does it render the foul more meet to receive Christ ; yet is it so far necessary, yea absolutely necessary, previous to the grace of the gospel, that no one will regard the call thereof, before he be the subject of such repentance ; this hath been abundantly explained in the first part of this enquiry.—But to return to our general propositions.

Fourthly, Conscience properly enlightened hesitates not to reprove the elect of God before calling, any more than it doth the reprobate, who are the subjects of such illumination.

This

This is naturally deducible from what has been already observed concerning the divine law disapproving of the elect, as well as others; previous to their effectual calling. For if all mankind come into the world under the guilt of the first sin of their federal head Adam, are equally polluted in consequence thereof, alike incapacitated, either to make satisfaction, or yield obedience to the demands and requirements of that law ; it will unavoidably follow, that there can be no lawful authority for conscience to conclude even of God's people in a natural state, that justice regards them with less displeasure, than those who shall never be partakers of his love ; because a legal state is a state of wrath, sin, and death, and through the law, no mercy, grace or strength is communicated, forasmuch as it is a way shut up and prohibited. Now if any soul should by a supposed conformity to its injunctions conclude the Lord regards it, with the least degree of favor, as he does those who are brought to a saving acquaintance with Jesus ; or that such conformity is acceptable to God, or deserves grace to render its person or his ways well pleasing to the Lord, certainly draws an inference from fallacious principles, and errs for want of greater and clearer conviction of the law's demands and injunctions : for this error is through the blindness of the conscience, which if properly informed would have

spoken

spoken the language of the law itself, and given its verdict correspondent to the voice thereof, and no otherwise. This is clearly taught by the 13th article of the Church of England.—“ Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.”—’Tis certain there is a vast disparity between the moral and religious conduct of one natural man, and another: and although the law may not, yea will not equally condemn all such persons, they being not in every respect violators alike of its injunctions and prohibitions, even materially considered; yet with relation to purity of motive and end, it will find all (void of the grace of God) wholly and entirely deficient. Hence it necessarily follows, that conscience properly informed cannot give verdict in favor of any man in this state, with respect to any one action, word, thought, inclination or affection, so as to pronounce it pure and agreeable to the demands of the law. Wherefore the people of God uncalled have no better hope than others.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, No man dare say he is reprobated, who hath not committed the unpardonable sin.

That this is a truth is evident from our Lord's own words, *Matt. xii. 31.* *All manner of sin, and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.* What can possibly induce any of the children of Adam to conclude they are rejected, while such a declaration from the lip of truth stands on record? Sinners unawakened and unconvinced think little either of God's everlasting love or hatred; they are too much attached to the principles connatural to the human species to admit such reflections, unless it be to explode and condemn them. No doctrine can be presented to the minds of hardened sinners that is so disgusting, and against which their enmity is so readily excited as the divine sovereignty touching the eternal state of the individuals of mankind. Where is the heart which can relish it? We may admit it into our judgments, but can we approve thereof? We can scarcely think the Lord righteous in appointing any to certain and endless misery and punishment, unless we ourselves be not only the subjects of grace, but are also conscious thereof. The natural heart militates against it with all its power. Who are so much hated in the world, who so despised and vilified, as the zealous defenders of this doctrine? Surely, were it not for a kind Providence, for the protection

protection the Lord is pleased to afford, one such person would not be permitted to remain in the world. Men therefore who are so inclinable to discountenance this great truth, draw not the awful inference that they are divinely rejected; far from it, their principles of religion are of a quite contrary nature, their hopes and expectations are built on such a foundation, as is utterly inconsistent with (as they are apt to esteem it) so horrible a doctrine. Hardened sinners are without all doubt in great jeopardy, and are not the self-righteous also? Yea are they not more so? Yet who will dare affirm this or that individual either of the one or the other class to be reprobated? Doth not divine history and frequent observation teach us that the Lord hath and doth call effectually some of all sorts? If so, no man hath any just authority to say of the most noted profligate, or proudest pharisee, that such are cast-aways. If then it be not lawful so to judge one of another, neither is it right to affirm thus of ourselves, even when we are the subjects of an enlightened conscience, for that is the season when satan and our own hearts are most likely to tempt us to it. In reality it is not lawful at any time, nevertheless when under deep convictions from the law, and Spirit of God, then is the season to expect the severest and most powerful assaults; the enemy will not be backward to embrace the opportunity.—

As

As he before buoyed up the man by false principles and hopes, will now suggest he is too vile to be saved, that his sins are either so numerous or atrocious, that it cannot be the Lord looks upon and regards him, as he doth his people; or that he ever will: if this do not quite discourage, he will insinuate that it is now too late, and that none of God's chosen are permitted to commit such horrible iniquities, or to continue so long in a sinful course as he hath done. To all these temptations is not the declaration before noticed a sufficient answer? "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" or if this will not do let us connect therewith, *Isai.* liii. 6. "And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all."—The soul perceiving the number or atrociousness of his iniquities to be insufficient pleas for so awful a conclusion, the enemy may then, to close all, make unbelief an argument. But where is the man who dares to say, though at present in a state of unbelief, he was not elected from eternity? Can such a one affirm, he shall never believe in Christ, though he be destitute of special illumination at present? The Lord both can and may enlighten him, and he that now is a stranger to the knowledge of himself, as well as the salvation of the Lord's people, may (if God hath so determined) very quickly evidence himself the subject of both. God's special election, and man's utter inability,

instead of limiting the gospel call, are the doctrines alone that can encourage to believe and embrace it, provided that the discovery of electing grace to the individuals concerned therein consists in an unfeigned belief of the above call. Deny God's sovereignty in choosing, you immediately establish the errors of *Pelagius*, and suppose that man hath some little strength left, and is capable if he please to fulfil the terms, and embrace the Savior, and that if he do not it is his own fault. This at once strikes at the universality of the gospel message; as on such a principle none would be called thereby, but those who have fulfilled the conditions, and do dispose themselves by the power of their free-will to receive Jesus. Though the foregoing observations appear of sufficient validity to prove the point here asserted, nevertheless we will adduce one argument more, and close, viz. that the elect of God are only known to him previous to their effectual calling. To evince this truth by scripture testimony beyond what has been already done would be needless, as all Calvinists acknowledge it, and they who are not of that stamp deny the doctrine itself, yet will it be necessary to draw the inference following, viz.—That if the objects of eternal election, while in a natural state, be only known unto God to be so, none of the children of men in that state, can with propriety affirm that they from eternity were not

not by him chosen. For if they dare not say thus of others, why then of themselves ? If then God's elect people when in a natural state be not distinguished from others to be his people by any particular mark or character ; if the law of God equally disapprove of them as it does of others, and conscience enlightened know no difference ; and if they be then only known unto the Lord, and that no son or daughter of Adam in the state aforementioned dare say they are not elected, it must remain a certain truth, that the gospel wherever it comes speaks to every one who either reads or hears it.

C H A P. IV.

The Call of the Gospel is free and gracious.

HAVING in the preceding chapter finished our inquiry touching the universality of the gospel call, our business is at present to consider what hath been further asserted, viz.

That it is also free and gracious.

This is obvious from the epithet given it, 2 Cor. vi. 1. " We then as workers together with him beseech you also, that ye receive not the

grace of God καὶ τὸ Θεὸν in vain." Likewise *Titus* ii. 11. "For the grace of God (expressed by the same original words as in the preceding passage) that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." As the word here used excludes all merit, and signifies a free gift, this appellation pertaining not only to the blessings which come by the gospel, but to the word of the Lord's grace also, *Acts* xiv. 3. argues the freedom thereof as a dispensation. Moreover the freedom of this call may be inferred likewise

First, From the nature of it.

Secondly, From what the word declares concerning the grace of regeneration, through which the Lord's people are in his appointed time obedient to the voice of his gospel.

First, The freedom of the gospel call may be inferred from the nature of the invitation, which appears to be not only of them who are already partakers of grace, but of those also who are entirely destitute thereof. *Isaiah* lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Here may be intended two sorts of persons, the one that have grace already, the other that are destitute thereof. That the former are

are invited none will doubt, but that the latter are so favored many question. Yet if the objection of such persons be admitted, in what way can we determine the one received grace, and that the other is to expect it ? If the gospel call extend to none but those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and this desire is concluded to be the fruit of regenerating grace, how can such a sentiment be reconciled with *Rom. iv. 5. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* For if the call of the gospel be limited, it behoves every one who hears it to examine whether he be or be not the person to whom it is directed, lest he should be guilty of intrusion, or of taking that for which he is not warranted ; which method if pursued naturally infers, that every one thus qualified who believes for justification cannot believe to that end, and purpose, but as a person conscious that grace, yea special grace, hath distinguished him from others. Whether this be the genuine intendment of the text let the candid judge. Without doubt they who have already believed are invited to believe again and again, and to reiterate their acts of faith as frequent as they stand in need ; but the question is, whether the scripture last cited do not respect the first act of trust for justification, rather than after acts thereof to that purpose, which if it doth, by the thirsty

thirsty, and he that hath no money must be intended two different characters ; or if by the thirsty be intended not only him who hath a gracious thirst, but chiefly and primarily them who pant for those things that will not profit ; the inference deducible will be the same, which construction the following verse seems to countenance. In the *Revelations*, chap. xxii. 17. we have a similar passage.—“ And the Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come : and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” The latter clause of this verse is a sufficient proof of the matter in hand, viz. the freedom of the gospel call, provided whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely, intends not a mark or character, whereby one man may consider himself invited rather than another. That it doth, few sound divines would affirm ; they would rather say, though the will is from God, yet the person who receives, accepts not the blessing from a consciousness that such a will is wrought within him, but warranted by this passage as a free grant, he takes the blessings thereby held forth to be accepted and embraced. That this conclusion is not novel, let us see how this clause hath been expounded.—“ The “ water of life designs the free favor and love of “ God, and the communications and displays of “ it in the new Jerusalem state, even the com-“ fort,

" fort, refreshment and glories of that state : to
 " take it is to enjoy it, to partake of it, being led
 " unto it, and that being given to them by Christ
 " the Lamb in the midst of the throne, chap. vii.
 " 17. and xxi. 6. and which is had freely, with-
 " out money, and without price, as in *Isai.* lv. 1.
 " which seems to be referred to ; for the happi-
 " ness of this state, as well as eternal life, is the
 " free gift of God through Christ ; and the per-
 " sons encouraged to partake of it are whosoever
 " will, that is, whosoever has a will to divine
 " and spiritual things, wrought in him by God,
 " for no man has such a will of himself, *Phil.* ii.
 " 13. though this does not so much regard the
 " character of the person, that may take of the
 " water of life, as the free manner in which he may
 " take it. So the Jews are wont to express them-
 " selves, when they would signify the liberty that
 " might be used, or the free way in which any
 " thing might be taken, particularly of the law
 " and the things of it, [whosoever has a mind to
 " take, let him come and take] as it is said *Isai.*
 " lv. 1. " Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c.
 " that is, he is free to take, he is welcome to it,
 " which passage referred to is thus paraphrased by
 " the targumist, [Ho, whosoever will learn, let
 " him come and learn.] Thus *Dr. Gill* on the
 place.

Secondly.

Secondly, The freedom of the gospel call may be inferred from what the word declares touching the grace of regeneration, through which the Lord's people are, in his appointed time, obedient to the voice of the gospel.

Respecting infants it relates not to our present purpose. The matter of our inquiry is confined to those who are capable of the exercise of their rational faculties: this being fixed we will inquire what the word of God declares concerning the quickening and regenerating of dead sinners. If we turn to *John* v. 25. we shall find, that it is the voice of the Son of God, which is attended with this mighty operation. The words are, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."—That the voice here spoken of was the voice of the gospel preached by the Son of God himself, that the dead here mentioned were they who were dead in trespasses and sins, cannot be questioned, if due regard be had to the verse preceding, viz. verse 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." If therefore the gospel of Christ, when attended by the power of the divine Spirit, be instrumental to quicken dead sinners, then this gospel calls upon all to awake and

and come to Christ, whether they spiritually hear it or not, and consequently must be a free gospel; as a man spiritually dead can do nothing either in a way of desert or meetness, whereby he might acquire this life. As the voice of Christ to the man in the gospel who had the withered hand could not be disobeyed without imputation of guilt, as we may well suppose; so the message of grace, if received not into the heart by those to whom it cometh, it will increase their condemnation.— Were the obedience of faith the gospel requires above the rational faculties of mankind; was there no susceptibility in their souls of the doctrines of grace, objections might with propriety be made to the message of the gospel: but seeing the death is spiritual, and not a deprivation of man's mental and rational powers, he may reasonably be called upon to do that which he hath no spiritual ability to perform. Again; the promulgation of the gospel is declared the mean or instrument, in the hand of God, of our new birth, *1 Pet. i. 23.* “ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Therefore it must be free; for how could it be embraced by any on account of any goodness in them, who immediately before the hearing or reading thereof were in a state of spiritual death? For an elucidation of this passage compare *1 Pet. i. 3.* with *Rom. iv. 24.*

To all which let us add *James* i. 18. together with the judicious *Dr. Guise's* exposition thereof.—“We
 “ who believe, have a most eminent and endear-
 “ ing demonstration, that the best of all blessings
 “ derive from him; as it is not from any wisdom,
 “ or power, worthiness, or merit in us, but
 “ merely of his own good will, and sovereign
 “ pleasure, according to his abundant mercy, that
 “ he has regenerated and begotten us to a lively
 “ hope of an everlasting inheritance, *John* i. 13.
 “ *1 Pet.* i. 3, 4. by means of the gospel, which is
 “ his true and faithful word, and is rendered ef-
 “ ficacious in the hand of the Spirit, for producing
 “ the new birth, and all the holiness and happi-
 “ ness that ensue upon it, (see *John* xvii. 17. 1
 “ *Cor.* iv. 15. and *1 Pet.* i. 23.) And he has done
 “ this for us, that we like the first fruits under
 “ the law, might be consecrated to him as his pe-
 “ culiar property, and the most excellent kind of
 “ all his creatures.” Compare this and the afore-
 going passages with our Lord's own words to Nico-
 demus, *John* iii. 18. and the mistakes that other-
 wise might accrue concerning the genuine intend-
 ment of the following expressions, viz: “the voice of the Son of God,” “the word of God,” and “the word of truth,” will be obviated. From all which it is clear and evident that the gospel cannot be attended with any prerequisites, seeing there is no medium between a state of condemna-
 tion

tion and justification, of spiritual death and spiritual life, and that the mean of passing from the one to the other of these states is not the law but the gospel. In relation to the apprehensions and feelings of God's people, and the judgment they pass on themselves, it may be observed, these are very foreign to the thing in hand. What the saints of God perceive first in their own experience, they may indeed judge to be first implanted by the Lord: faith in the heart of the newly converted may well be compared to the seed hidden, which discovers itself by an unfeigned repentance; but that repentance should be the root of faith, because its subject is first conscious of repentance is in no wise conclusive. We might as soon suppose a man in absolute despair can repent. That he that is thoroughly enlightened by the law, and hath not the least discovery of the gospel, must be in that circumstance, is a maxim that cannot be gainsaid; wherefore the call of the gospel is not only an universal, (which hath been before proved) but a free and gracious call.

C H A P. V.

*The Word of Truth, or Gospel of Salvation, is an
undeserved Call.*

AS the nature of our present subject is of the last importance, and to be mistaken therein of the most dangerous tendency, we shall therefore not content ourselves with what hath been already observed, but in the next place inquire as proposed, whether

It be an undeserved call.

That it is undeserved, is manifest from what hath been already noticed to evince its universality and freedom. Indeed where there is no exterior revelation of the gospel, persons without it cannot be called to embrace the great things thereby set forth : that this is the case of multitudes no one will question. The Lord hath not in his word prohibited any of his ministers to proselyte barbarous and ignorant nations to the christian faith : in this respect the administration of this call is as free as the light with which we are surrounded, or the air in which we breathe ; yet in this he shews his sovereignty, in as much as that, which by his

word

word is approved of, by his providence is frequently inadmissible. How comes it to pass that at this present time the whole empire of Japan, that numerous body of people the Chinese, and various savage nations, are not favored even with the knowledge of the letter of the gospel ? Certainly this is not to be attributed to any want of power or wisdom in the Lord. It is but for him to speak, and the world shall be enlightened even with the light of salvation. *Psalms lxviii. 11. The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it.* They who oppose the divine sovereignty touching the eternal election of his people should account for the providence of God with relation to the outward manifestation of his truth in reference to both time and place. Under the Jewish dispensation was not the whole Gentile world in the grossest spiritual obscurity, destitute of the means of salvation ; which is the case as before noticed of many nations at present ? Is there not discriminating goodness displayed in that Great Britain is not now involved either in the darkness of Mahometanism or shadows of Popery ? Who can account for the difference which subsists between one part of this kingdom and another ? Are there not many cities, towns, and villages, covered over with Arminian obscurity, whilst others bask in the blaze of gospel light ? Will any say that one nation, city, town, or village, is more

more deserving than another ? 'Tis true the scripture doth inform us, that when the gospel hath been universally rejected by a people, it hath been removed from them ; yet this doth not imply that they were worse by nature than others ; neither the means, nor grace of the means are afforded according to man's desert, for he hath none ; else why was a persecuting Paul followed with special mercy, when a careless Gallio was left to perish in his iniquity ? Surely, no natural condemned sinner in the least differs from another, but by the legal operations of the divine Spirit, to answer the Lord's purposes of providence in the world, and to maintain that order which he hath decreed and appointed. Jerusalem exceeded all the cities on the earth for iniquity, yet must the gospel be first preached there. Unrepenting Capernaum must be exalted in such privileges which would have been effectual upon a Sodom or Gomorrha : not that any difference could have subsisted between the one or the other, but through the divine interposition. Doth not the case of the Lord's ancient people manifest the great degeneracy of human nature, seeing many of them are surrounded with gospel light, but to discern it they have no visive faculty, and will not exercise the rational faculty they have, unless it be to oppose and exclude it ? That this disposition is not wholly peculiar to them is apparent, since

since numberless individuals of the nations aforesaid cannot be excused. It is reasonable to suppose that not a few of them have heard of Christ, the sacred scripture, and of the followers of Jesus, yet have they not rejected both the one and the other with disdain, whilst others have enwrapped themselves in a fond conceit of the certain truth of the religion of their ancestors either Pagan or Mahometan, and have no disposition to inquire after or examine into the truth of that which is able to make them wise to salvation?— How far this disease is common let experience testify. But to resume the subject.

That the gospel call is undeserved will be evident, if we consider what it calls from, which is

First, Our own worthiness.

Secondly, Our sufficiency. And in the next place, what it calls to, viz.

Thirdly, To trust in the worthiness and sufficiency of another, both for grace and glory.

First, It appears to be unmerited, in as much as it calls us away from trusting for life to our own worthiness.

This is the grand cause why the human heart doth not relish it. Pride and self-righteousness have

have so possessed the human breast, that nothing less than omnipotence can dethrone them. The Lord intended man's happiness in a state of innocence in subservience to his own glory, but he by his fall infringed the divine prerogative. *Gen.* iii. 5, 6. "For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened : and ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." By pride we all fell in our first head, and how this capital evil entwines about our hearts, sad experience doth wofully testify. Why did the Jews reject the Lord Jesus ? Was it not from this principle ? They expected a Messiah, who should set them above all the nations of the earth round about, render them free of the Roman yoke, and bring all into subjection to their authority ; but being disappointed of this their expectation in the person of Jesus, though he gave the most irrefragable proofs of his Messiahship, what do they say ? *John* xi. 48. "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Notwithstanding this malign principle, connatural to the whole human species, reason dictates to every thinking

thinking mortal, that some infectious evil hath overspread the race of mankind. The wiser heathen so concluded, yet never could explore the occasion and origin thereof. They were ready to acknowledge that man in his primæval state was in other circumstances than in their day, and that the moral obliquity, which fell under their observation, was not originally the unhappy attendant of his natural existence. Calm reflection both heretofore hath, and still doth afford the same verdict, and therefore it is become the universal sentiment of mankind that the Deity is offended, and that men in general stand in need of an atonement. Though natural reason suggests from the dictates of an accusing conscience, that all is not well between the Supreme Governor of the Universe and our own souls, yet where is the man who will acknowledge that all relating to him of a moral nature is entirely ill, and that he never was the subject, either of one internal or external act but what was sinful? Pride will not suffer us to regard ourselves as poor bankrupts: we are for compounding matters with the Lord. Many can receive the gospel, but then it must be in their own way. As the Jews could have received a triumphing Messiah, but not a suffering one; so we can receive a gospel which will allow some room to boast of our worthiness and sufficiency, so it doth not rob us thereof altogether. Hence

the readiness among men to embrace for gospel, the New, instead of the Old Testament : 'tis a milder law, say they, which if we be obedient unto, Christ shall be of avail to us. Any scheme of salvation that is consistent with our limited apprehensions of divine purity, holiness, justice, and mercy ; but not as these divine excellencies exist in God, meets with our approbation. What is the language of this but a declaration of rebellion, an abjuration of him as our sovereign, and a tacit avowal, that as his glory was tarnished by the breach of the first, it shall not be exalted by us through the redemption of the second covenant, even the covenant of grace ? No one who will give himself a moment's time and pain to reflect, but must allow that the Lord has proposed a manifestation of his glory, or what he is, in the redemption of the human race ; therefore he will be known in all, whom he brings to his kingdom above, to be infinite in justice and mercy also ; but alas ! such a phrenzy and madness hath captivated the minds of men in general, that they will not suffer it. If the Lord will save them to the disparagement of both they are contented ; to be saved otherwise they care not at all for it : but why all this boasting against the wisdom and goodness of God ? If the gospel were calculated to deprive us of any real excellency, there might be room to object ; but when it shall appear, that it only

only calls us from an imaginary, to the enjoyment of a real and substantial good, which will enrich us to eternity; why should we be offended with it? That this is a truth scripture loudly declares, *Rev.* iii. 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." If the Lord speak thus of a declined church, certainly it well suits those persons who are yet in their natural state. Again. The apostle Paul speaking of the old man, or corrupt principle within, says, *Rom.* vii. 18. *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.* Was not the apostle mistaken here? What! was the apostle, when he was destitute of Christ, and before he believed on him, totally and altogether void of every good thing? If so; how comes it to pass that almost all the world should be of a different opinion? For if they have no more to boast of by nature, than the apostle had when in his natural state, certainly every unregenerate man who continues to lean on his own imaginary worthiness, to the rejection of the gospel call, will be found at

last to have been grasping not that which will preserve him from the deluge of divine wrath and indignation, but a vapour, a shadow, a nothing.— Therefore as the gospel calls us not from depending on any real self worthiness but only the semblance of it, from thinking we possess what we have not, and from leaning on vanity, it certainly is an unmerited call.

Secondly, It calls us from all self sufficiency. Self worthiness and self sufficiency are inseparably connected, He that esteems some righteousness necessary to entitle to Christ, hesitates not to conclude that it is in the power of his will to perform it. These are the leading sentiments of most men; some will go further and affirm, that with respect to knowledge touching the welfare of the soul, there is rather too much in the world than too little, that mankind need not be informed what they ought to do, but they should be more careful to do what they know, and that the only reason why they do it not is, because they will not be attentive and take pains with themselves, will not labor and endeavor to put that in practice they are convinced is their duty: such who are of a deistical turn so speak. However, few there are but will affirm, they are capable of doing what is good and to do it effectually, if the Lord will be pleased only to assist them, which when done they think shall render

derthemselves fit objects of his mercy. These consider man in his natural state not as dead, but wounded, debilitated, and enfeebled, and therefore he is to endeavor and strive with himself to the utmost of his ability, and to implore the divine assistance to enable him to perform the prerequisites of the gospel. Such persons need a further legal illumination, they see not the spirituality of the law and what it requires ; if they did, they would be convinced that it is impossible any good act could be performed by them, for which instead of meriting the divine favor, God dealing with them according to the nature thereof, they would not sink under his just displeasure for ever. Besides such either know not or do not believe the word of God concerning man's unworthiness and inability ; if they did, they would readily confess with the apostle, that in their flesh, nay in them, being yet without grace, dwelleth no good thing ; but before they are brought to be assured that their hearts and natures are spiritually dead, they will be ever dreaming themselves capable of living actions.—That this is the true state of man before grace and faith through the gospel, evidently appears from *John i. 12, 13.* “ But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—More might

might be observed touching man's utter inability whilst in a natural state; and prior to the reception of grace through the gospel; yet as this point hath been largely treated in the first part of this inquiry, proceed we then to take notice

Thirdly, That as the gospel calls us from a trust in our own imaginary worthiness and sufficiency, it calls to a true and spiritual confidence in the worthiness and sufficiency of another, even of the Lord Jesus Christ, both for grace and glory. To trust the eternal welfare on a righteousness and ability, which in reality we are not the subjects of, the meer child of fancy, begotten by the pride connatural to man in his present fallen state, what can be more awful! Certainly in this respect we may well be compared to beggars, who dream they are rich, opulent and powerful princes, encircled with all that may be esteemed grateful and pleasing, yet when they awake find it but a dream.— Therefore to be called from such a delusive dependence, to trust in the righteousness of one who not only was in his human nature immaculate, spotless both in heart and life, who in that nature suffered and died for us, after a life of entire conformity and obedience to the law of God in our room and stead, but all this effected in personal union with the divine Word, co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. Moreover to be called from a reliance on an ability we really are not the subjects

subjects of, to expect from the Lord Jesus Christ, on account of his satisfaction only, all grace in time that may be to God's glory, and our soul's profit ; and finally, the free gift of heaven, both as a state of holiness and consummate happiness. Surely such a call must be allowed, unless by those who are void of natural reason, to be an unmerited and undeserved call ! Were we fully sensible of what we are by nature and practice, did we perceive ourselves under the righteous sentence of the eternal Jehovah, in the grave of sin as a mighty conqueror, held fast by the adamantine chains of a corrupt nature, we should not hesitate a moment in acquiescing in the propriety of the present proposition : but alas ! the pride of our hearts through the mighty working of unbelief hath such a dominion over the whole soul, that we are as naturally inclined sinfully to presume, as the sparks fly upward : and until the law, through the divine agency, enlighten our benighted hearts, we will not let go our false and delusive confidence, which when we are obliged to relinquish, unavoidably fall into the contrary extreme, an absolute despair of God's mercy ; and should for ever there remain did not the Lord call us by his gospel, and attend it with some special power to our consciences.

C H A P. VI.

The Gospel Call is a merciful Call.

WHAT we are next called upon to attend to will be allowed by most in word, but not in reality, viz.

That the gospel call is a merciful call.

That it well deserves this epithet appears from *Luke* i. 76, 77, 78. “And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by (or for) the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us.” For if John, in this passage, be pointed out as an instrument to prepare the way of the Lord by publishing that gospel, which reveals the mercy of God to poor sinners, then the call thereof most certainly is entitled to the epithet merciful: for confirmation whereof compare *Titus* iii. 3. to the 8th verse, with *1 Cor.* iv. 15. However as there be various opinions among men concerning the mercy of God, which by the gospel they are exhorted to trust in; some

some concluding that though they maintain human nature to be not without some excellencies, and that mankind using their natural powers aright may perform some actions truly good, or which have a certain degree of goodness in them, and the mercy of God in Christ to be rightly viewed, though it be regarded only, as pardoning for Christ's sake what shall be found deficient: whilst others hesitate not to affirm, that where there is any merit relative to eternal salvation, the subject of that merit cannot be esteemed an object of divine mercy. Let us make the matter the theme of our present inquiry, and explore if possible who are the proper and sole objects thereof. Now before this subject be prosecuted it will be necessary to make some observations on the word itself. Mercy cannot be conceived of in its display unless some object in misery exist, on which it is exercised, how else doth it differ from love, grace, and goodness? In the original of the New Testament it is expressed frequently by the word Ἑλεός, which *Beza* says, is significant of every kind of good things, with which men are blessed by God freely. *Turnovius* notices that the word as relating to God, denotes pity of every kind, and endless benignity. *Leigh* in his *Critica Sacra* remarks, that the Seventy generally used it in translating the Hebrew word רחֵם, which he interprets, a sacred affection of mercy, pity, grace, benignity, and bountiful

good will towards any without respect of merit : it is, says he, that benignity or beneficence which one is obliged unto by no legal necessity : this is plainly unmerited and not due, and altogether free favor. The Seventy have likewise used it to express the Hebrew word יָמֵן, *Psalm* vi. 2. The root of which the above author translates by *miseritus*, *gratificatus*, *gratificatus*, *gratia prosecutus fuit*, *doluit*, &c. and says it imports to do a thing gratis. Respecting the original of the words tender mercy expressed in *Luke* i. 78. *Zanchy* hath an observation worthy of regard ; it is (says he) expressive of such a kind of affection as parents are fraught withal, when they see their children in any extremity. From all which may be fairly deduced, that the word mercy as applicable to God is manifestative of his nature, and also declares that when displayed it is in the deliverance of the miserable : this obviously corroborated by another original word used to point out the divine mercy in several parts of scripture, as 2 *Cor.* i. 3. ὁ πατὴρ τῶν οἰκτιμῶν, *Col.* iii. 12. ὥλαζχα οἰκτιμῶν, *Luke* vi. 36. also *Rom.* xii. 1. διὰ τῶν οἰκτιμῶν. It is translated “ by the mercy ” but the Greek word is in the plural number *per miserationes*, *Chrysost.* *Theop.* *Orig.* Though there be in God *miserationes multæ*, yet there is but one mercy which is his essence, from whence issue *motus misericordiæ*. See *Leigh's Critica Sacra*.— Having obtained by the foregoing remarks some information

information touching the true import of the word mercy, it is necessary to resume the present inquiry, why the gospel message, or word of salvation, may be denominated a merciful call.

First, It may be so considered, because it reveals salvation,

Secondly, Inasmuch as it calls upon the truly miserable in the divine account and estimation.

Thirdly, It well deserves the epithet merciful, since without it no one would be authorized to embrace the blessings it exhibits.

First, The call of the gospel may be denominated merciful, inasmuch as it reveals salvation.

What the salvation is which the gospel discovers hath in the beginning of this inquiry been already investigated, and there proved that none but God's elect people shall enjoy it. The point at present in view, being not so much the rich and inestimable blessings of new covenant grace, as the medium whereby they are conveyed, we pass on to the second argument, viz.

Secondly, That the gospel is a merciful call, inasmuch as it calls upon the truly miserable in the divine account and estimation.

W^ere we to leave this proposition without en-

largement it would be fully evincive in favor of this truth, viz. that the least merit in reference to the salvation of the soul is inconsistent with the idea of divine mercy. As the greatest worldly happiness cannot denominate a man truly blessed, so, on the contrary, the greatest temporary sufferings and afflictions do not denote a state of true wretchedness. To be approved or disapproved by the Lord is declarative of the one or the other. To say there can be in any man the least degree of merit, or in his acts either internal or external the least measure of goodness in God's account, relative to justification and eternal life, whilst in a natural state, is a self contradictory assertion. A man must either be condemned or justified, spiritually dead or alive : these are extremes, between which there is no medium ; a semi-justification, and to be half-born, in a spiritual sense, are equally to be exploded : the very terms, with respect to the soul, are both preposterous and ridiculous. Therefore all who are not fully justified before God, and born again of him, are the objects which are truly miserable in the divine account, because both they and their actions are under the condemnation of his most righteous law ; and being wholly flesh, they are in a state of utter incapacity to please him, even in a single instance, whether of thought, word, or deed. This being a situation so awful in its consequences, such as renders

renders the subjects thereof in extreme jeopardy of everlasting destruction, consequently such persons being already dead in law, and beyond all possibility in the least measure to deliver themselves, the call of the gospel in all those circumstances being God's call, must have annexed to it the epithet of infinite mercy, seeing the objects thereof are fallen under the displeasure and curse of him, who in holiness and justice is illimitable : all which evidently appears if we consult the following passages of sacred scripture, viz. *Ezek.* xvi. 4, 5, and 6. *Luke* vii. 42. *Rom* viii. 8. *1 Cor.* iv. 15. *Heb.* ii. 3.

Thirdly, The gospel call well deserves the epithet merciful, since without it no one would be authorized to embrace the blessings exhibited in the gospel. What these are have been hinted at in the course of this inquiry. They may well be compared to a collection of dainties composing the richest feast that ever was provided ; yet what avails this most noble of entertainments, unless an invitation be offered. We frequently hear of many a well furnished table, but if we be not bidden, what are we the better ? Can we partake thereof uninvited ? Who is there that presumes to intrude himself at an earthly entertainment ? How much less that which God has provided unless he be bereaved of his sences ? Would it be any

any thing short of the most vicious intromission ? The more august the provider, and the more costly and expensive the feast, the more are persons disinclined from such a conduct notwithstanding they are in perishing circumstances, unless permission be afforded to that purpose. Surely ! All that Christ hath done and suffered, all the blessings promised through his redemption, would have been unprofitable to the children of men, were they not warranted to trust in the one and expect the other : this evinces and proves the great importance of conceiving aright of the gospel message. Many judge that none are invited, but they who are worthy. Others come with the preconception of their own meetness ; what is this but popish congruity ? And some imagine that none be invited, but they who can discover the marks of election by the fruits of regenerating grace. The two former sentiments have been long since exploded, and those who maintain the latter have not been without their opponents.— What satisfaction can it give to a person, under a very deep work of the spirit of bondage to hear, that the redemption of Christ, and all the blessings thereof are confined to the elect : persuade such a soul that none but the elect are warranted to embrace them, and that all others are strictly prohibited from so doing, what must be the consequence but absolute despair ? Would not such a one say, if

if all mankind are saved, yet if this be not my happy state at present, and I am debarred from faith and trust in Christ the only mediator, I have no hope, I feel myself in perishing circumstances, a sense of the divine displeasure still increases within me, my sins appear more and more glaring, my heart is hourly more obdurate, and I am incapable of repentance. Can a soul in these circumstances have the least footing for trust in God, by the most enlarged and perspicuous representation of the blessedness and privileges of God's people who are already favored with the evidences of electing grace, whilst it remains persuaded that none are permitted or warranted to embrace Christ and his salvation but such ? But how did they first confide in him ? Was it by virtue of their worthiness or meetness ? If by either, how does it appear that their faith had a good beginning ? And if they now believe in him, because they are conscious they believed such principles, whence doth it appear that it will have a good ending ? However we would not hence infer, that all such are void of the grace of God ; certainly believers there are who are much tainted with the doctrine of prerequisites to a saving faith in Christ ; also many who maintain that none but those who have already believed are warranted to trust in him, yet such persons may have an interval, through the grace of the divine Spirit, when they embrace the mediator

mediator on different principles, and as the way which God hath provided, not for the righteous only but for sinners: nevertheless the doctrine of divine acceptance ought by all to be considered as the most important and interesting point relative to the christian system, and should excite us to earnest prayer, that we might therein be clearly taught, not in notion only, but truly and experimentally, lest we be found at last to have erred not only in head, but in heart also. As it hath been already evinced that the call under consideration is both universal and free, and that the person calling is none other than the Lord, it amounts to a full and sufficient warrant for sinners of all denominations, to embrace the salvation thereby exhibited, whether they be obedient thereunto or not, and consequently well deserves the epithet here given it: this appears by the apostle Paul's description of the ministry of reconciliation. *2 Cor. v. 18, 19.* "And hath given to us (says he) the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God, was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Being not altogether persuaded that the succeeding verses may be considered in the same light, I pass on with this observation, that the judicious *Dr. Owen* hath so considered them.—By the above apostolic declaration it appears, that the

the mercy of God is not only displayed in Christ on the behalf of his people who have already believed, but to sinners of every rank and denomination, and that it may be manifested yet in very many, may the Spirit of the Lord through the law so convince them of their sin, both of nature and practice, that they may be beaten out of all their false refuges; brought by him through the gospel to receive what the Lord so freely and unreservedly offers, yea invites and commands them to accept.

C H A P. VII.

The Gospel is a righteous Call.

HAVING in the preceding chapters inquired into the universality and freeness of the gospel, and shewn also that it is both an undeserved and merciful call, therefore what remains is lastly to inquire

Whether it be a just and righteous one. In the prosecution of this particular it will be necessary to give the utmost attention, as all which hath been before said wholly depends hereon.— But ere we proceed, it is to be remarked, that the

views which the professed Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, and Arminian entertains of the gospel, are to be taken for granted to be vain and nugatory : that the present subject is not handled in reference to a partial, but a full and compleat salvation, which if once begun through faith in the heart, shall certainly and without all doubt be maintained and continued even to death, and then perfected in glory. Having thus premised a few particulars concerning the salvation referred to, it is yet necessary to observe also that the satisfaction of Christ to law and justice is the only medium of conveyance ; that without the perfect reconciliation, viz. of an holy, righteous, and just God, not a single son or daughter of Adam could have been delivered from everlasting misery, made the subject of special grace here, and finally brought to eternal blessedness. Moreover we must add, that the redemption of Christ finished and compleated on the cross was in reality, touching the certain attainment of complete salvation, only in the behalf of elect sinners. That the faith which doth not apprehend Christ crucified for pardon of sin, and his obedience and righteousness as the only true title to grace and glory, cannot be evinced by the divine word to be the faith of God's elect. *John* xiv. 6. " I am the way, and the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father but by me." *Rom.* v. 21. " Even so might grace reign through

through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." To all which let it be added, that without the call of the gospel there could be no true and saving faith; which call although it be not definite as hath been already proved, but a general and indefinite call to believe unto eternal life, yet it is not an unrighteous, vain, and deceptive, but a true and righteous call; which is the point proposed to be evinced. To this proposition many good men have and do object; if say they the Lord was incarnate, did obey, and die solely in behalf of his elect people, with what propriety ought any but his chosen to believe he was incarnate, did obey, and die for them? This renders necessary the following observations, viz.

First, That the revelation of the gospel may, and doth beget a faith in itself, as a system of religion, in contrast and opposition to all other religions: this may fall short of salvation.

Secondly, That the chief end and design thereof is, that men for themselves may embrace, lay hold of, and depend on the mediator it reveals, as the end of the law for righteousness, and by and through him surely expect the grace and glory the Lord hath promised to his elect people.

Thirdly, No person is authorized to affirm he is of the number of those whom Christ redeemed

by his fulfilment of all righteousness, until that person can prove to himself he hath cordially and savingly believed.

First, The revelation of the gospel may, and doth beget a faith in itself, as a system of religion, in contrast and opposition to all other religions.— This may warrantably be asserted, when we consider that almost all Europe is of the christian persuasion, in opposition to the Pagans, Mahometans, and Jews, which at present maintain the contrary ; but who will affirm, that only to profess the name of Christ, in opposition to these, will assure a man eternal felicity ? Certainly the whole Popish hierarchy might be esteemed the saints of the Most High, provided salvation could be so easily obtained : even that corrupted church itself will not allow of such a proposition, seeing it excludes all from the kingdom of heaven, who are not of her community, notwithstanding they may profess the name of Jesus. As the world in general are divided into four grand denominations respecting religious sentiments, so they who bear the name of Christ are not without their parties. To enumerate the various sects who go under this character would be to little purpose, seeing but few do maintain a form of sound words. Some deny the proper divinity of the Prince of life and glory, others his sacrifice, whilst a third part count his righteousness

righteousness only available to render the former meritorious. Waving therefore parties and parties, we will suppose the gospel rendered effectual to many to beget a set of principles in their minds as consistent with itself as ever was professed ; if such rest here can this profit ? Suppose a man as high in the doctrines of grace as ever any yet attained, if he believe only in and not on Christ, what doth this argue in his favor ? If he credit every truth relative to God's people both called and uncalled, can this save him ? To hear what God hath purposed in their behalf, what he doth for them in time, and the great things he will certainly do for them in eternity, what warrant doth this afford me to believe on Christ, if the gospel give no further encouragement ? What satisfaction can fallen angels enjoy in hearing of a redeemer provided for Adam's fallen offspring ? Restrain the gospel call, and what hope is there left ? For how doth it appear that we have any gospel at all, by which we may obtain the divine favor ? If the law leave us after all its convictions, terrors, and thunderings, though awakened yet under its dominion, we differ only from our former condition just as a man in perishing circumstances and sensible of his state differs from another in the like danger who yet is insensible and secure. Despair only adds to our condemnation, it is productive of no virtue ; consequently if the call under consideration be not

indefinite,

indefinite, it must be the contrary, and so leaves us to perish in our misery. But supposing it to be definite and that I and many others are the persons on whom it calls, how did we attain that which so defines us ? If it be answered neither by the law nor gospel, but by the Spirit of the Lord in a sovereign way unknown to us, we tracing the effects of this his sovereign operation conclude ourselves his elect people, on whom he calls ; allowing this position what doth our faith amount to ? Doth it amount to any thing but this, that because of these effects it is evident that Christ and all the blessings of redemption are ours : while these are discerned our faith, or rather conclusion is clear and strong, but if they should be obscured, we are to wait for a renewed evidence thereof. How the foregoing maxim can be proved from the sacred oracles is hard to say ; on the contrary, if the gospel be the divine instrument by which a saving faith is produced, then faith is something more than a conclusion founded on imaginary marks and signs ; or a bare assent to the truth of a set of religious principles how consistent soever they may be with the gospel of Christ, which assent will certainly profit us no more than Balaam's did, who could believe for others, but not for himself.

Secondly, The chief end and design of the gospel is, that men for themselves may embrace, lay hold

hold of, and depend on the mediator it reveals as the end of the law for righteousness, and by and through him expect the same grace and glory the Lord hath promised to his elect people.

Who they are that are called upon so to do hath been already shewn, even those who are at present under the law, and dead in trespasses and sins; to which call it hath been noticed no such persons will be obedient, until the convictions of the law have brought them to a despair of ever attaining life through a legal conformity. Wherefore let it be observed that

First, They are called to look on Christ crucified, finishing redemption by his death, as God's appointed way of salvation.

Secondly, As before characterized, viz. as having nothing to pay, they are to trust, confide, and assure themselves, that he finished the great work for them, because God inviteth sinners through him.

Thirdly, They are to confide, trust, and assure themselves that God will pardon, justify, and accept them freely, coming unto him through the finished redemption of his son.

Fourthly, They are, thus fiducially believing on Christ and God by him, to depend upon it that God will certainly bestow on them both grace and glory.

First,

First, Sinners; even the chief of sinners, are called upon to look on Christ crucified finishing redemption by his death, as God's appointed way of salvation. Most men who are the subjects of legal conviction, and are alarmed in their consciences, very soon conclude that Christ is the Lord's appointed way, but the great difficulty with such is, how they shall be entitled to come to God by this way: therefore they labor to the utmost of their ability to prepare, qualify, and render themselves meet for such an approach, taking the chief comfort and encouragement in their preparation and meetness; but when the Spirit of the Lord, through the law, hath shewn them the insufficiency of all such attempts, and by the gospel persuades the heart that they, and they only who have nothing to pay are welcome; their souls are immediately desirous in some measure to cast themselves upon the mercy of God through Christ Jesus. Our present business is not to treat of the operations of the divine Spirit on the hearts of sinners through the word of grace, but what the import of that word is, and to prove that our present proposition is that, which it inculcates. This will appear if we consult *Rom.* iii. 25, and 26. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say,

at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth on Jesus." The call of the gospel on sinners is not to believe they are; but to believe in order that they may be saved. Therefore if it call on them to look on Christ crucified, as thereby finishing the work of redemption, and therein being God's appointed way for salvation, it also calls on them,

Secondly, As such to trust, confide, and assure themselves, that Christ finished the great work for them. The former proposition implies no less; if the latter be denied the former is rendered vain to the soul, which is in perishing circumstances, and is seeking for salvation. What is the complaint of such a person? Is it not that his sins are like mountains upon him, that the fierce wrath and displeasure of the Lord is ready to crush him, that he hath no righteousness, whereby to stand before an holy and just God with acceptance? What doth it avail to inform such a one, he ought to believe that Christ is the Lord's appointed way for sinners to be saved, and yet that he as a sinner hath no warrant so much as to attempt to trust or confide that Christ died for his iniquities, that he wrought out a perfect righteousness for him. Will not such a burdened and law condemned sinner reply, to what purpose do you acquaint me that the righteousness and atonement of Christ, is

God's appointed way for the salvation of sinners, if I a sinner am not to labor, authorized by God's word, to trust and confide Christ did all this for me? Do you think that rather than I should perish, Christ will come again from heaven to suffer? Or may I content myself with such a faith as dares not trust my sins were laid upon him, that only credits the report of his being a savior to his elect? If I must content myself with the latter, alas! alas! I know of no marks or tokens, but those of the wrath and displeasure of a just and righteous God; and unless I can cleave unto this savior for myself, I must inevitably perish to all eternity. Again. As the gospel calls on sinners not only to look on Christ as God's way, but also to trust in him as a way for them; so also

Thirdly, Doth it call on them to confide, trust, and assure themselves, that God will pardon, justify, and accept them freely; coming unto him through the finished redemption of his son.

It may possibly be asked, is not this a chimera, a believing what may eventually appear to have no real existence? To which it may be replied, if the God of truth, holiness, justice, and mercy, doth call in his gospel, and a soul obeys that call, the Lord is engaged, that no disappointment shall follow such an obedience. Whatever the Lord does must be righteously done; the very supposition

tion that the call, invitation and promise of the gospel, or whatever it may be denominated, being his, is a sufficient proof of its veracity and rectitude. It is to be considered not as speaking of sinners in general, neither as speaking to them collectively but indefinitely and individually. It admits not any one to reply, he is too guilty or too vile ; nor doth it find any who can warrantably affirm, he is not elected ; could such an instance be produced, that is the soul that can upon the principles of moral rectitude refuse to hearken to the voice of mercy. Every one who is favored by a kind Providence with the scriptures of truth, is not principally required to attend what concerns others, as a necessary means of his salvation, but what relates to himself, and as this behoveth one, so doth it another that is alike favored : if a single individual could rationally object to the word of truth calling, because it is not manifest to him he is a chosen vessel, why might not another ?— And why might not all do the same ? And if so, how would Christ see of the travel of his soul ?— 'Tis by the obedience of the gospel, electing grace is evidenced to God's chosen feed. Doth not this appear from *Ephes.* i. 13, 14. “ In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance,

until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." The proposition now considered relates to the end of faith. What would it signify to trust in Christ as God's way, and as his way for ourselves, unless we so did in order to some end? The very idea of a way implies as much. Consequently we are called by the divine voice to trust that God will pardon and accept us, we building our confidence on the foundation he himself hath laid; coming to him in the way of his own appointment: not that souls in whom at first grace may be, as the smoking flax and bruised reed, can do in point of degree, what the gospel calls on them to perform; that is a matter which at present relates not to our subject, nevertheless the voice of truth is still the same, whether men be obedient or not. The more we believe and are persuaded, the more we honor the divine veracity. Was God to deal with his people according to the worthiness, or rather unworthiness of their faith, they must perish for ever: but Oh what goodness! what mercy! what love! that despises not the dim eye, the trembling hand, neither the paralytic feet of his people's faith. For confirmation of what hath been said, attend we to Paul's words or rather the words of God by him, *Rom. iv. 20.* to the close, speaking of Abraham, it is said, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving

giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." What the improvement is we may see by the following words:—" Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Fourthly, They who are called to believe as aforementioned, are required to depend that God will certainly bestow on them both grace and glory.

" How shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?" are the words of an inspired apostle, *Rom.* viii. 32. who also affirms, 2 *Cor.* i. 20. " All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us :" by us who hold forth unto you, or unto others, a crucified savior, who hath both obeyed and died for sinners, even by the appointment of the divine Father, and in whom he is well pleased, in order for you and all who hear the gospel to believe and confide in ; to this blessed end and purpose, even for the enjoyment of all that a God hath promised to bestow through him, of which you do not well to doubt

doubt and question : for all the promises in him are yea. Having finished these particulars, let us return to the last general head, viz.

Thirdly, No person is authorized to affirm he is of the number of those, whom Christ redeemed by his fulfilment of all righteousness, until he can prove to himself he hath believed thereunto.

This will serve for an answer to the objection before made, viz. " If the Lord was incarnate, obeyed, and died solely in the behalf of his elect people, how ought any but his chosen to believe he was incarnate, obeyed, and died for them." An heart confidence on the mediation of Christ founded on the gospel, considered as God's call to sinners, is quite of a different nature, from warrantably affirming either to ourselves or others, that Christ did die and obey for us. The one is built on the divine testimony in the gospel, through which the Holy Spirit generates faith in the hearts of his people, to take hold of, appropriate, and confide in the incarnation, righteousness and death of Christ, as God's appointed way of salvation ; and the other is bottomed on the perception of a faith so actuated, inclusive of all its sanctifying fruits and effects. The former is an obedience to the gospel call, the latter arises from a perspicuous evidence that we have obeyed it. But lest a shadow of absurdity should seem to

to remain, let it be further noticed that no fallen son or daughter of Adam, convinced or unconvinced by the law, can trust, confide, or assure themselves in the former sense, notwithstanding the gospel call, but by the energy of the divine Spirit thro' it, which energy or power is the peculiar gift of God's elect, in order that they may be saved.— This doctrine the great apostle of the Gentiles evidently inculcates, *Ephes.* ii. 8, 9, and 10. “ For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” Similar to which the master himself hath spoken, as may be seen *John* vi. 44. “ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” *Matt.* xi. 27. “ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him.” Wherefore this power is, as before asserted, the peculiar office of the divine Spirit to impart, as many other passages of sacred writ affirm, particularly *John* iii. 6, 8.— Thus though it remain an incontrovertible truth that whoever comes to Christ must be animated so to do by the divine Spirit of all grace, or he will

never

never believe on the Son of God, yet is not the gospel call useless and vain, because it is a rational call. Mankind in general are in condemned and perishing circumstances, whether they will believe it or no, because scripture hath so declared it, in which God hath also revealed a savior, and signified that he will pardon and forgive, and receive sinners to his favor through this savior, that they shall be blessed by him with all such gifts, as shall render them happy both in time and to eternity.— Howbeit if they will neither credit God's word of threatening nor promise, but on the contrary reject and despise it, give the preference to every idle amusement and concern; then until it can be proved (though men be not spiritually quickened) that they act rationally in so treating both law and gospel, the latter, viz. the gospel cannot be evinced to be useless and vain, though disobeyed; as is evident from Paul's declaration, *2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.* “ For, says he, we are unto God a sweet favor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are a favor of death unto death, and to the other the favor of life unto life.”

C H A P. VIII.

The Publication of the Gospel Call.

HAVING finished as proposed, viz. an inquiry into the nature of the gospel call, we shall come now to treat of the publication thereof.

That the sacred scriptures are sufficient of themselves in the hand of the divine Spirit, both for conviction and conversion, were the Lord pleased so to use them, is without question; but so the Lord hath not always determined. On the contrary it seemed good unto him primarily to give unto the church, first apostles and prophets, afterwards evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. *Ephes.* iv. 8, 11, 12. 'Tis the appointment of God that in this present state men should be employed in various occupations for the temporal benefit of themselves and one another, and it is their duty in their respective callings to glorify him as the ultimate end of all. As therefore the far greater part of mankind are daily to attend secular affairs, the Lord hath also ordained from the beginning the rest to meditate, study, explain, and inculcate

his truths, for which last mentioned purpose he hath appointed and enjoined public meetings and assemblies periodically to be attended, wherein and at which times he will socially be waited on and worshipped. This divine ordination is attended with innumerable benefits of a spiritual nature, without which, through the apostacy of Adam and original depravity, mankind would have sunk into absolute and down right atheism. But this divine purpose of social worship hath taken effect through the whole series of time accompanied by an unremitting succession of ecclesiastic officers for the ends before signified : the chief of which all will readily allow (who are divinely taught) to be divine instruction through a gospel ministry, which ministry consists of two parts especially, viz. the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the perfecting and edifying of saints. The former of which I shall only attend to, and consider the office of an evangelist with respect to sinners in a two fold relation.

First, As a preacher of the law.

Secondly, Of the gospel.

First, As a preacher of the law. To preach the law appears not very suitable to the character of a gospel minister, yet it is necessary in order that men who are in the utmost danger of perishing everlastingly,

everlastingly, may be apprized of the jeopardy they are in. The necessity of this does not arise so much from the vileness of their state, and their unworthiness to receive the gospel of glad tidings, as their entire indisposition to attend unto the divine and gracious message: they see no need thereof, they are at ease, and regard it not; when alarmed the ministry of the law is further necessary to convince them of the insufficiency of all the false refuges, to which in this circumstance they are inclinable to fly unto.

Secondly, The office of an evangelist consists chiefly and principally in promulgating the gospel declaration.

How this should be published, the nature of the gospel itself is a directory. That it be with perspicuity the necessity thereof will appear, inasmuch as men in general are apt to err about it. The scriptures are not plain and obvious at first view, but to those to whom the Spirit of the Lord will so render them; which he is not pleased in general to do, but expects that much diligence, prayer, and meditation should be used, and frequently that one person should inquire of another, concerning the things which relate to their eternal welfare, in which duties he is pleased to open their understandings. The scriptures are only from themselves capable of being explained, con-

requently they whose business it is to labor in the word and doctrine, are best qualified to deliver their import and meaning to others; besides they who are truly called are called by God to their sacred function, and consequently are in a more peculiar degree under the divine influence, and are entrusted with more talents than the private christian. Let this therefore suffice touching this branch of our inquiry, and proceed we in the last and succeeding chapter to consider (as proposed) the instrumentality of the gospel in subservience to the operations of the divine Spirit in the effectual calling of sinners to a state of grace.

C H A P. IX.

The Instrumentality of the Gospel in effectual Calling.

WERE not the call of the gospel at any time, attended with power to the hearts of dead sinners, they would necessarily remain in a state of spiritual death to eternity. As the law without the Spirit of God is insufficient to convince of sin the hardened offender, so is the gospel of truth incapable to convert the natural heart without the almighty operation of that divine agent. 'Tis irrational to suppose, as hath been heretofore proved,

proved, that the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity, who is Lord and sovereign of the divine law will ever justify or condemn those who are under it, but according as they are thereby found: with equal propriety may it be affirmed, that they who are capable of the use of their rational faculties, he will never convert but by his gospel; what may falsely go under that name to suppose he can or will own to saving purposes, is both horrid and blasphemous. That he may over-rule error to the manifestation of the truth, is no more to be denied, than by the permission of sin he may eventually deliver from all sin. Many a saint when in a natural state has been first awakened to a deep consideration of themselves, by means of some extraordinary iniquity they have been suffered to commit; also the truths of the gospel have been investigated with uncommon assiduity, by means of the errors that have been broached concerning it. If we apprehend error for truth either in reading or hearing, our faith is formed accordingly, and therefore cannot be the faith of God's elect. Though the people of God know not the whole of gospel truths, yet there ever will be an harmony between the essentials thereof and their faith. These things being premised, it will not be amiss to inquire

First, Whether the divine Spirit doth effectually call men without the dispensation of the gospel.

Secondly,

Secondly, If it be not the instrument of begetting faith in the heart through the Spirit.

Thirdly, If it be not the nature of true and saving faith to perceive the gospel as it sets forth the way to God, and to embrace it.

Fourthly, Whether the perceptive and fiducial properties of faith be not one before another in order, though not in time.

Fifthly, If true love be not the immediate fruit and effect of Christ perceived and embraced by faith, through the gospel: godly sorrow and true repentance the instantaneous productions of love.

Sixthly, Whether the subject of this special grace may not be unable to conclude, he is a real partaker of it.

First, It is demanded whether the divine Spirit doth effectually call men without the gospel.

They who affirm the gospel revelation is absolutely necessary to salvation, have by the generality of mankind been always esteemed as persons of very uncharitable sentiments. This censure certainly arises from the imaginary and delusive conclusion, that natural men are apt to draw, viz. that by their works they must be saved. Indeed if their judgment herein can be supported by the unerring

unerring standard of truth, they then do well to infer that where the scriptures are not known, those who are ignorant of redemption by Christ may do well by an upright conformity to the dictates of a natural conscience : howbeit on this principle they must prove that the Supreme Governor of the universe will, as an absolute God, pardon not only the sins of infirmity, but also the original sin of all such, seeing they are without a sacrifice : but the sacred word instead of being a prop to, flatly discountenances such vain conclusions. In one place it affirms, *Rom.* iii. 20. “ By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in God’s sight ;” and in another, viz. *Prov.* xxix, 18. “ Where there is no vision the people perish.” The natural heart determines for God according to its preconceptions of him. Men in general are of opinion, that if their fellow creatures act according to the best of their knowledge and power, God is obliged to accept them. This is their conduct toward their children, and those who are under their authority, and can you suppose say they that God is less merciful ? Upon these principles to what lengths do men extend his mercy, and yet rightly apprehended how do they contract it ? Were they as solicitous to secure the honors of his justice and holiness, they would not be so ready to censure them who maintain the necessity of gospel revelation, but framing

ing a deity according to their own liking, whom they represent to themselves neither infinite in justice nor mercy ; they are irritated to the last degree (like to the proud king of Babylon) against all those who will not fall down and worship the image they themselves have set up. Others there are who acknowledging the necessity of the revelation of Christ, yet unwilling to condemn the heathen destitute of the gospel, think that the Lord the Spirit without the word discovers him to their hearts. Certainly this the Lord can and may, but that he doth or will do, his word appears rather to deny than maintain. If not, what construction can we put on the scriptures just now quoted, as well as on the following passages ?—
Rom. x. 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. “ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? And how shall they hear without a preacher ? And how shall they preach except they be sent ? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things ! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report ? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This declaration from the lip of truth leaves the foregoing

going sentiment without any foundation, which if established would bring down our Lord's threatening *Rev.* ii. 5. to a mere nothing. But that the gospel must be discovered to sinners, either ordinarily or extraordinarily, ere they can obtain the divine favor and be saved, is without doubt. The Church of England sticks not to anathematize all those who deny it. *Art.* 18. "They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved." If the matter stand thus, how important the gospel! No wonder satan so rages at it. Nothing meets with so much opposition in the world as the word of the Lord's grace. Evil angels withstand it, knowing its excellency, being fully assured that it tends above all things to the demolition of their authority, and that wherever it comes it shakes the kingdom of their prince even to the foundation. What doth our Lord himself say on this occasion? *Luke* x. 18. "And he said unto them, I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven." But how doth the enemy of souls oppose it? First he will reject the very name of Christ by exciting hatred in those under his power. Is not this the melancholy case

of the Pagan, Mahometan, and Jewish world?—He stirs them up to be enemies to their own salvation. If any individuals among them should be led to embrace even but the name of Christ, much more his scripture, what opposition from their brethren immediately ensues! Abuse too virulent, and treatment too cruel, cannot be devised, that in their judgment they think such deserve not. In the christian world the enemy acts another part; if he cannot expel the name of gospel, he will pervert the thing; this was the case in Paul's time. What doth that great apostle say on that occasion? What his words are may be seen *Gal. i. 6, 7, 8, and 9.* “I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him, that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”—Let us stop here and ask this question, hath not the Arian, Sabellian, Papist, Socinian, Arminian, &c. &c. perverted the gospel of Christ? They all pretend to teach and preach it, but must we believe what they deliver to be pure gospel, because they say so? The name of gospel will not save us. Whatever appellations men may give to things, unless they be rightly named, they are not the things thereby represented. Therefore this is a very subtle device of satan. Do not men at present for the most part turn the law into gospel,

gospel, and on the contrary the gospel into law? And those who come nearer the truth, do they not inculcate some conformity to the law as a step to Christ? Every where; and in every one is there a war against the gospel revelation and call, even the hearts of God's people, in proportion to the a^{ct}s of the old principle within them are fighting against it; but let us see of what importance the inspired penman regards this point? He adds, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."—A matter of consequence indeed, that could draw from the pen of a man, whose heart was so replete with divine philanthropy, as it appears his was! But to shew that the subject he had now in hand was to the utmost degree interesting and important, he subjoins "As was said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." No matter whether professed brethren, or open enemies, Paul regarded it not, he condemned them all, in this exceeding momentous and weighty concern. Seeing then that a right display of the grace of the gospel, and a warrantable call to the enjoyment of that grace, are set forth in far more different points of view than any other subject, it behoveth us to be careful what apprehension we entertain thereof, and

to be solicitous that our conception of this matter be agreeable to the mind and will of God. For although it be exceeding difficult to form a right judgment herein, unless we religiously and attentively adhere to the Lord and what he declares, yet it seems from what hath been observed in the course of this inquiry, that we shall not err, if we follow this rule, viz. to regard the blessings of grace as freely held forth to sinners not only as dead in sin, but wholly under the condemnation of the law, to be accepted by such through that mediation only, whereby God is declared to be infinite both in justice and mercy; and also not only to look on these benefits as lawful so to be received, but to be concerned with an heart confidence to embrace them accordingly, by virtue of and in obedience to that call, which is both indefinite and free, concluding that the gospel alone is a sinner's only proper title to Christ, and Christ received by faith, is his sole title to grace and glory. The next particular to be investigated is

Secondly, Whether the gospel call be not the instrument in the hand of the divine Spirit of begetting faith in the hearts of God's people.

That it does not in all who hear it, is not owing to any limitation in the gospel, but must be attributed to the good pleasure of him alone, who can only render it effectual. That it is the instrumental

mental means of faith, is clear from a passage lately cited, viz. *Rom. x. 17.* which passage is exemplified by the apostle's declaration to the Thessalonians, first epistle, chapter i. 5. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Hence it is apparent the inspired writer intended, a discovery of what entertainment the Thessalonians gave the gospel, on its being first promulgated amongst them. "For yourselves brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain," are his words, chap. ii. 1. If the gospel call is denied to be of this use, how shall we understand many metaphorical expressions we find in sacred writ? Of this sort is *John* xii. 38, 39, 40. ".Lord who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them." Likewise *Matt. xi. 15.* "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." All which portions of holy scripture evidently denote, that without the gospel men can neither see nor hear what is absolutely necessary to their salvation, and though highly privileged therewith, unless the Lord the Spirit open thereby their understandings, they neither

see

see nor hear it spiritually to the embracing thereof, and to the building all their hopes and expectations on it, for deliverance from the miserable circumstances in which they are through sin and the fall. A disordered man neither sees nor hears aright the prescriptions of an infallible physician, if he be totally unaffected with his advice and counsel ; but he that thankfully and earnestly embraces it, sees so as to perceive, and hears as to understand the propriety and utility of what is prescribed him. Our Lord's words *John* viii. 32. are not foreign from our present inquiry, " And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Do not these words evidently imply that the truth is the instrument, and yet without a powerful hand to use it, it is of no avail ? Is not the import of these words also, that, that divine agent who effects a spiritual freedom will not afford it, but by the truth ? If the arguments now used and scriptures adduced are not sufficiently conclusive to prove our proposition, will not the testimony of the apostle James, which before we had occasion to cite determine the matter ? *James* i. 18. " Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." — Seeing therefore that the gospel is of so great utility, without which nothing of a saving nature is effected in persons capable of mental reflection, how ought we to prize, esteem, weigh, consider, ponder and pray over it ? Should it not be regarded

garded by us as inestimable, infinitely to be preferred to all the little concerns of a temporal kind? Ought we not to banish at the remotest distance the notion some have embraced, that it being capable of abuse, it concerns us little to pay any strict attention to it, but follow after love, the chief object? Could true love be obtained otherwise than by the gospel, the conclusion would not be impertinent; but if it be the only channel, by which this grace is derived, how dangerous the conclusion! Therefore let us not reject truth, much more gospel truth, but rather pray we the God of all grace, mercy and love, that it may be the power of God unto our souls, not only for our conversion, but also for our edification and establishment.

Thirdly, Let us examine if it be not the essential property of true faith to perceive and embrace the gospel, as it sets forth the way to God, for acceptance and salvation.

This position strikes us with no small concern. It demands at first view the utmost attention and scrutiny: to err here is not to mistake in a trivial matter, but in that which is of the greatest moment. It is not like the circumstantials of religion, but it seems to relate to religion itself, even to that which properly deserves the name and to be the very essence thereof. Were there many ways whereby

whereby we might approach God with acceptance, and through which he communicates his grace in time, and perfects that grace at last in glory, it would even then behove us to know and be assured we were walking if not in one, yet in another of those ways: but if the way be but one, and it is possible we may fatally err in respect to it, to use all means both to know and how to attain thereto, must be allowed to be highly necessary and requisite. It is obvious that at the commencement of the gospel dispensation the disciples of our Lord were ignorant of many things, which at present are judged of great moment: they knew not the nature of Christ's kingdom, and instead of looking for an heavenly, they were expecting an earthly one. Little did they think their master was to be so treated, as the event manifested, wherefore Peter could chide our Lord himself, even for hinting at the treatment he must necessarily undergo. However we dare not question, but the disciples were even then the subjects of regenerating grace, for though they did not believe as circumstantially in the Savior of mankind, as they did after his resurrection and ascension, yet they did then believe and trust in him as the Messiah, the sent, yea the Son of God, and Savior of the world: for though they were ignorant in what manner he was to prove himself their deliverer, yet without doubt their whole dependence was on, and

and expectation from him only. What denominates the faith of any man true or false, effectual or ineffectual to salvation, is a point of great importance to determine, and ought to be handled with great caution and fear, seeing in this state the best ~~are~~ subject to much spiritual darkness and obscurity, nevertheless it may be safely concluded, that as a man beholds the gospel so is his faith. If he conceives of it as a new law, his faith is legal. If he regards Christ as the way to God for acceptance and salvation, only for those who have rendered themselves if not worthy yet meet to walk in this way, how doth it appear he hath a true confidence ? If he views God's appointed way only for such who both are and know themselves to be saints, and this hath ever been his apprehensions, how is it manifest he hath believed on him that justifieth the ungodly ? And what necessity can he ever have to believe in Christ for justification ? For if conscious he is a saint, he must know he is justified already ; and if ignorant thereof he hath no warrant to believe for that purpose. Although the disciples before Christ's death believed in him alone for salvation, but were ignorant in what way it was to be effected ; now the salvation is finished doth it not become absolutely necessary to be informed both of the nature thereof, and who the persons are that are warranted to embrace it, in order that we may

not build our confidence but on truth? What things therefore ought now to be discussed are the following, viz.

First, Whether the Lord did not chiefly and primarily propose his own glory, viz. a revelation of his infinite justice and mercy in the redemption of sinners by Christ Jesus.

Secondly, If it be not his good pleasure that true faith should so honor him.

Thirdly, Let us inquire whether this can be done, if the gospel call or warrant be limited.

First, Did not the Lord chiefly and primarily propose his own glory, viz. a revelation of his infinite justice and mercy in the redemption of Christ for sinners?

To deny that he did is to make the creator subject to the creature, and to think of the infinite Jehovah more unbecomingly than of one of our own species who is capable of the exercise of his rational faculties: is not that man accounted the wisest, who adapts his knowledge to the best ends? Who is there that undertakes any affair of importance without proposing to himself an end worthy of such an enterprize? Are we tolerated to expect such wisdom from men, nay is not every one tenacious of this character? And shall we rob the

the Lord of this essential attribute ? Whatever the infinite Jehovah doth must be infinite wisdom ; and what more suitable to be proposed thereby, than a display of the divine perfections ? Is there any greater than he ? Are not all things created by him, animate or inanimate, rational or irrational ? We hear an inspired writer cry out, *Psalm* civ. 24. “ O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all.” But how this wisdom is manifested the apostle Paul declares, *Rom.* i. 20. “ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”— If the Lord intended a display of his infinite goodness and power in creation, shall we take from him his prerogative in the further discovery of himself in redemption ? Surely the unlimited mercy of God never could have been manifested, were souls to have remained for ever under the power of law and justice ; and justice itself doth not appear so grand and boundless, but as in harmony with infinite mercy through the redemption of our Immanuel. What were Paul’s sentiments on this matter, or rather what doth he by the Holy Ghost say concerning this ? *Ephes.* i. 7, 8. his declaration is, “ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ;” which expres-

sion we may look on as tantamount to the riches of his mercy, seeing the miserable are the objects of this grace. He adds, "Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence," without doubt all that wisdom and prudence worthy of Jehovah; which passage if compared with *Rom.* iii. 26. will appear plain and intelligible, "To declare I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Secondly, Is it not the divine purpose, that true faith should honor the Lord as a God of infinite justice and mercy in the redemption of sinners by Christ?

That it is *Rom.* iii. 27. sufficiently proves, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." *Dr. Gill* on this last clause expounds as follows, viz.—"The word law here answers to "the Hebrew word *Torah*, which signifies any "doctrine or instruction, and oftentimes the doc- "trine of the gospel, as in *Isaiah* ii. 3. and chap. "xlii. 4. and here particularly the doctrine of a "sinner's justification by faith in the righteousness "of Christ, according to which doctrine the most "unlikely persons are justified, even ungodly "persons, the worst and vilest of sinners; and "that without any consideration of works, by "faith

“ faith only, which is freely given them, and by “ faith in Christ’s righteousness only: so that “ there is not the least room for boasting in the “ creature, but all their boasting is in Christ, “ who is made unto them righteousness, and by “ whom they are justified.” Compare this scripture with *Rom.* iv. 20. to the close, also with the *1 Cor.* i. 30, and 31. and it will appear that as the redemption of Christ was calculated to glorify God, and lay the creature in the dust, so faith must receive it, and ever harmonize with the gospel in relation to acceptance, which faith is not a speculative principle only, but rather what it sees clearly it embraces strongly; both which peculiar properties thereof may be evinced from *Rom.* x. 8, 10. “ The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach.” Here the apostle calls the gospel the word of faith, whereby the first property is obvious, and in the following words the latter is discovered: “ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Proceed we now to the next particular, and inquire

Thirdly, If the gospel call or warrant be limited, is it possible to honor God (as aforementioned) by believing? viz. as a God of infinite justice and mercy.

The call of the gospel has been already shewn to

to be the call of God, and also that it is an universal, free, undeserved, merciful, and righteous call. The redemption of Christ hath been evinced to be primarily intended for the manifestation of the harmony of the divine attributes of justice and mercy in the salvation of sinners ; that faith which embraces the redemption tends to the same end, for which so great a work was compleated ; and finally that the gospel, through the Spirit, produces an effectual faith. If faith correspond not with the object it is to embrace with relation to the grand end and design for which the latter was provided, viz. the glory of God, it is beyond contradiction a corrupt faith, not the confidence of the Lord's elect, which confidence the divine Spirit is pleased only by the gospel to impart, therefore the call thereof must be as before described, viz. an universal, free, undeserved, merciful, and righteous call, otherwise it is not calculated to produce such a faith. But on the contrary if it be not universal, it cannot be free, as hath been largely proved ; and if not free, to evince it undeserved and merciful will be exceeding difficult, unless the Lord's elect people were manifested to be so either to themselves or others without the gospel, or before they were called thereby : if their election be not thus manifested, they cannot believe as the chief of sinners, but as contra-distinguished from others by some goodness which is peculiar

peculiar to them, of which they must be also conscious, in order to be authorised and warranted to believe. This at once overturns the whole gospel system, and renders the covenant of grace effectual, in consequence of some good thing the creature performs or that dwells in the elect hypothetically circumstanced in opposition to others; but by such a faith how is the creature shewn to be entirely under the law of condemnation and to be wholly flesh? How is he declared to be such a miserable object, that infinite mercy is glorified in his salvation? By such a confidence how doth the exceeding riches of divine grace appear? Or how can the rectitude of the gospel call be evidenced, that calls on him as the chief of sinners, when there are millions worse than himself, in consequence of the want of those prerequisites, which he enjoys? What did the apostle intend in *Gal.* iii. 1. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?" Doth he not herein plainly signify that many are called by the outward call of the gospel, to whom it is not made effectual by the Spirit? If not, why does he say, chap. iv. 11. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." But if the gospel call be to all, then they who believe and embrace the mediator whom it sets forth, and all new covenant

blessings

blessings in him, as condemned, perishing, helpless, and miserable creatures in themselves, they do so to the glory of God's infinite justice and holiness, also to the honor of his unbounded love, grace and mercy, and thereby set to their seal that he is the God of truth and faithfulness. Having treated already the gospel message more at large, we will proceed to the next general head, and inquire

Fourthly, Whether the perceptive and fiducial properties of faith be not one before the other in point of order, though not of time ?

If not in point of order, how is the gospel revelation a means ? If these properties are not the immediate effect one of the other, how is the gospel revelation and call an effectual means ?

First, If the perceptive and fiducial properties of faith be not one before the other in point of order, how is the gospel revelation a means of this grace ?

To perceive is an act of the understanding.—To trust is an act of the will. To confide without perception either of the sufficiency of the object to preserve us, or that it is lawful to trust in it, is inconsistent with the very principles of a rational soul. This is asserted against those who would affirm the will of man to be independent of his understanding. Experience evidences that the will

is often very unduly and improperly exerted, yet will it not follow that such an exertion is not the effect of choice. Though the volitions put forth by men in general may not arise from an elaborate inquiry into the rule of their conduct, yet are they the result of their understandings, springing either from misconception or doubtfulness, especially when it happens much trouble is required rightly to determine, yet nevertheless they may be said to originate from a supposed eligibility of one thing in preference to another. Wherefore by what is now observed concerning the perception of men, is not intended that the acts of the will and every act of trust are always the result of that perception which properly deserves the name, but for the most part rather of that which is but imaginary and delusive, yet to determine the mind it must be either the one or the other, or where two propositions are set before us to be the rule of our choice, that which appears most perspicuous and profitable will produce it. No man wills any thing without some conclusion in the understanding either true or false, as the source thereof, and certainly at that time under the notion of good, however evil it might afterwards be perceived to be. Disallow of this and what is the will of man any more than a blind necessity and inclination, no better than the mariner's needle inclining to the northern pole, or a stone projected

into the air tending to the centre of our globe?—If this be the case with respect to the human will, who does not see that where confidence is exerted it must arise from a persuasion or conclusion previous to it? A man trusts not his substance into the hands of another, without being persuaded that he is a man both of wealth and probity with whom he leaves it. Who puts his life into the hands of a physician, unless he be persuaded of his skill and honor? If this be the case in temporals, certainly it is or ought to be much more so in spirituals. What gives occasion to the various religions in the world? Do they not all originate from the different conclusions among men with relation to their ground of trust? Surely every man supposes that what he confides in, is not only a proper object, but that it is free for him to trust therein for that end he proposes to himself: deny the latter and what avails the former? Is a person in famishing circumstances benefited by the most sumptuous entertainment, if he be not permitted to partake thereof? Or a man condemned with others to die profited by a royal grant of pardon, if he be not included in it? Certainly not.—Therefore it is conclusive that the perceptive property of faith, through the gospel revelation and call, must be prior in point of order to the trust or confidence of faith. However let us consider what authority the scriptures afford for such a conclusion.

a conclusion. The first passage apposite is our Lord's own declaration, *John xvii.* 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Again. Our Lord's petition, verse 17. "Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth." Which word we may well suppose intends the word of the gospel. But it may be asked, may not this knowledge be unattended with that trust and confidence which denominates a man a true believer? Certainly it cannot ; for the knowledge here mentioned is the effectual teaching of the divine Spirit through the word, or gospel revelation or call, brought home to the understanding mentioned by St. Paul, *2 Cor.* iv. 3, 4, 5, 6. wherein he affirms that they who are never acquainted therewith must unavoidably perish, and on the contrary they into whose hearts it hath shined must certainly be in a state of salvation.— "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in

the face of Jesus Christ." As the words of the apostle here cited denote a special acquaintance with the gospel, they must also denote the universal and gracious call thereof; otherwise it would never have shined into their hearts, for the glory of God is as much displayed in communicating gospel grace as in providing it. If not so it would be difficult to assign a reason why this great apostle of the Gentiles should be so zealous against those who pervert the gospel of Christ, as appears by *Gal.* i. 6. to the 11th verse, also chap. ii. 13. to the close. How is it made evident that we are taught of the Spirit through the gospel, if we have no warrant to embrace it for ourselves, nay if we be not divinely instructed and persuaded that it is provided for sinners, and that therefore as such we are not only permitted but commanded to trust therein for our own salvation? This doctrine the same apostle inculcates, *Rom.* iii. 28. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Also *Tim.* i. 15, 16. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." From all which it appears that both the gospel and the call thereof must be

be perceived by the power of the divine Spirit in the heart, ere there can be any trust and confidence therein.

Secondly, If the trust of faith do not immediately succeed the sight thereof, how is the gospel revelation and call an effectual means ?

Can we suppose these are possibly to be divided so as that it might warrantably be affirmed, that he who is taught by the Spirit of the Lord through the gospel, in an especial and saving manner, hath no trust therein ? His being so enlightened by the scriptures of truth evinces that he is passed from death unto life, yet if he hath no affiance and special confidence, the same divine oracles pronounce him under condemnation. That the gospel must shine into the heart ere it be properly enlightened, and when it so doth that there salvation is begun, hath been proved already ; but if this light do not immediately beget a special reliance, dependence, trust and confidence, how doth it appear that the man's state is altered ? Is he not still under the law, under the wrath and displeasure of God ? Need he not some other instrument or means, whereby he may become the subject of this trust ? For if it be allowed he is specially illuminated, and yet without this essential property of true faith, by what way shall he ever attain it, seeing the gospel can do no more for him ? But if the

apostle

apōsle affirm that it is the power of God unto salvation, *Rom. i. 16.* it is then evident that the fiduciāl immediately succeeds the perceptive property of this grace, agreeable to the Psalmist's words, *Psal. ix. 10.* *And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.* As also to what our Lord says, *John vi. 45.* *Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* Therefore he that sensible of his misery and danger in a legal state, hath a discovery by the Spirit through the word of truth of the person, atonement, and righteousness of Christ, as the only foundation of acceptance with an infinitely holy, just, and righteous God, and that it is the good pleasure, yea command of God to all, even the chief of sinners, to come unto him in this way, and that he hath promised pardon, grace, and glory through it; that soul no more nor even so much hesitates as not in reality to come, than one who is drowning deliberates whether he shall accept of that offered deliverance which he knows is sufficient to save him from perishing. Our next inquiry is

Fifthly, Whether true love be not the immediate fruit and effect of Christ perceived and embraced by faith: godly sorrow and true repentance the instantaneous production of love.

An author of no small repute expresses himself on this subject in such language as few real children

dren of God can understand or comprehend.— His words are as follow :—“ Some say, that it is “ impossible for any man to have any love to God, “ or any other being, but that love to himself “ must be the foundation of it. They argue, that “ whoever loves God and so desires his glory or “ the enjoyment of him, desires these things as “ his own happiness ; and so they say it is from “ self love, or a desire of his own happiness, that “ he desires God should be glorified, and desires “ to enjoy his glorious perfections.” Here we may observe, that before faith takes place in the heart, 'tis impossible that love can rise higher in its aim in any breast, than what hath now been noticed by this author as the sentiment of others ; on the contrary, to suppose that a more exalted kind of love to God, and Jesus Christ, springs from a view of “ the divine excellency and glory, “ both of one and the other, and of the word, “ the works, and ways of God, &c.” to the preclusion of “ any supposed interest, that he the subject of such a view, shall receive from them,” is to separate the confidential property of faith from its perceptive, and to substitute a supposed super-eminent love, as the ground of faith's affiance, instead of the universal, free, and undeserved call of the gospel ; which call being also essential to a saving perception, the whole is annihilated both faith and love also, and a contemplation

tion of the divine excellence is placed in its room, which will never beget that love, which the author asserts arises solely therefrom. For proof of this conclusion consult *John* vi. 55. *Rom.* xiv. 23. *Acts* xv. 9. *1 Tim.* i. 5. *Heb.* ix. 14. *Gal.* ii. 21. He still adds, "It is unreasonable to think other-
" wise than that the first foundation of a true love
" to God, is that whereby he is in himself lovely,
" or that supreme loveliness of his nature. This
" is certainly what makes him chiefly amiable.—
" God's nature is infinitely excellent, yea it is in-
" finite beauty, brightnes, and glory itself. But
" how can that be true love of this excellent na-
" ture, which is not built on the foundation of its
" true loveliness? They whose affection to God is
" founded first on its profitableness to them, their
" affection begins at the wrong end, they regard
" God only for the utmost limit of the stream of
" divine good where it touches them and reaches
" their interest." This passage seems to inculcate
that the Lord may, yea must be viewed as an ob-
ject of love, ere he be viewed as an object of
trust. What saith the word of God concerning
this matter, *Rom.* vii. 4, 6. "Wherefore my bre-
thren, ye also are become dead to the law by the
body of Christ, that ye should be married to ano-
ther," to what purpose? "That we should bring
forth fruit unto God." What fruit? Doubtless the
fruit of love. If the author had placed love
where

where the apostle doth, he certainly would have been more intelligible, and perhaps more profitable. Again, verse 6. "But now we are delivered from the law." How? Was the apostle delivered only from his mistaken speculations, which he had changed for more exalted ones? Or was it a real deliverance by an ingrafture into Christ through the gospel by the Spirit? "That being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter :" that is, "From new principles and motives, and to new ends, with all freedom and delight in our souls, as those that are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and in a new life and conversation, all spiritual, holy, and heavenly, by the assistance of the Spirit of God." (See *Dr. Guyse* on the place.) Here it appears love takes its proper station; but when it assumes a superiority which becomes it not, an enemy more dangerous cannot be found, as the apostle very suitably observes, *Gal. v. 4.* *Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.* Instead therefore of loving the Lord to trust in him, let us behold him not only in the gospel as a Savior, but in the free publication of the gospel set forth for our salvation, which if so beheld what effect thereof will immediately be, let an inspired writer testify. *2 Cor. iii. 18.* "But we all with open face, beholding

ing as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This divine testimony plainly evinces the truth of our proposition, viz. that true love is the immediate fruit and effect of Christ perceived and embraced by faith.— This is a maxim certain and evident, how otherwise can the scriptures be reconciled? John our Lord's forerunner acquaints us, *John* iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.*— Compare this with what Paul denounces, *1 Cor. xvi. 22.* *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha.* Whence it appears, that if a man could be considered at any time as the subject of true and gospel faith, and yet not of love, that person would at the same instant be the subject of a blessed and a cursed state. Wherefore as the word of God is true, and the scriptures cannot be broken, love to God and Christ must be the immediate fruit and effect of faith, and not prior to or simply a concomitant of it. With relation to the additional testimonies of a gracious state, viz. godly sorrow and repentance, what can be said of them but that they spring instantaneously from a genuine love? It is not possible to conceive of them otherwise. If we have no love to God, we cannot grieve that we have offended him, and true grief has no existence where there is no desire of amendment. A newness of life will be

be more or less the immediate effect of this sorrow. Faith therefore as before described with love, godly sorrow, and repentance, not as links unconnected, but as a golden chain, immediately exist together by the gospel, through the Spirit, which might be noticed concerning all other graces did the subject call for it. But to shew this sentiment is not singular, let us reflect what were the views of our English reformers and martyrs on this head. Article the 12th of the Church of England, “ Albeit that good works, which are “ the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, “ cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing “ and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring “ out necessarily of a true and lively faith, insomuch “ that by them a lively faith may be evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit.” What therefore now remains is to notice, that we are not to apprehend that when the divine Spirit shines into our hearts by his gospel that our wills are moved to embrace the salvation displayed, to love the Lord in sincerity, or that we are the subjects of godly sorrow and repentance independent of him; no, but that this is the manner of his divine operations on the souls of his people, to comprehend the nature of which is far beyond the line of our scanty conception. It rather concerns us to experience a daily increase of his almighty

and efficacious grace, to his glory and our spiritual prosperity. What things have been observed in the foregoing inquiry, the motive for so doing may evidently appear to be an elucidation both of the nature and necessity of the gospel call to sinners, in order to effectual calling. Therefore where special faith and other graces have been treated, their order and manner of operation have been principally regarded: they themselves not considered as evidenced by the natural actions of their subject, whether internal or external, but rather according to their proper nature independent of the clog of a sinful and corrupt principle. Wherefore seeing every subject of special grace in this present world is, and will remain to be 'till the dissolution of the union of soul and body, a subject of the body of sin and death also; therefore the thoughts, conceptions, inclinations, aims, affections, words and actions of such must necessarily be the product not of grace only, but also of corruption; which grand principles in every saint, as they are diametrically opposite in their nature, so are they ever militating against and striving with each other for the mastery and dominion: the former by the divine Spirit maintained, increased, and at last perfected in its operations and influenced through the truth, by or in the way of all God's appointed means, as hearing and reading the word, meditation and prayer, christian fellowship

ship and conference and the like ; and the other excited and stirred up by satan's temptations, the allurements and menaces of the world, and the evils to which the Lord's people are subject in this present state. Therefore

Sixthly and lastly, Let us examine, whether every subject of true grace is assured of the time he was delivered from a state of nature.

When a son or daughter of Adam becomes through rich mercy a trophy of almighty power and goodness, and remains no longer under the dominion of sin, satan, or the world, such persons cannot be esteemed but in a blessed state.— Nevertheless so far are they themselves from such a conclusion in their own favor that it frequently happens they judge themselves ten-fold more the children of wrath, than they were ere they thought on the concerns of their souls. This unwarrantable supposition may arise from the very deep work of legal conviction, that they have been and still are the subjects of, aggravated not a little by the violent, impetuous, and incessant assaults of satan, who endeavors at such a season if possible to drive them into total and absolute despair of divine mercy : in order to obtain his end he excites and stirs up as much as he can, both the self righteousness and unbelief of the heart, which now work in a different manner than heretofore. For whereas

whereas the truth was then utterly discarded, and some false foundation laid as the ground of confidence; now Christ as the only hope of sinners is discovered, which the soul breathes and longs after, in opposition to the self righteous workings which it feels, yet at the same time the man reckons his breathings of no moment, and from a sense of his own vileness, and the temptations he feels and experiences, which through ignorance he is apt to charge on himself; unbelief will not suffer him to infer that he is in a state of divine favor; yet he is not capable of silencing his prayers and cries to the Lord for acceptance, and for some token of his special grace and mercy. What the Lord Jesus Christ hath both done and suffered is a great mystery of grace without, so are the operations of the divine Spirit, through the gospel, alike mysterious within God's people; wherefore to describe the smallest degree of true grace, as also to point out to what lengths a true saint may backslide, are both beyond the scope of the human understanding. However in answer to our present inquiry, let it be observed that the first views of the soul that are of a saving nature are not of objects within, but without it, and these the man may then see so dimly, that though he truly beholds and perceives them, and is a subject of a gracious change in consequence thereof, yet through the mighty power of unbelief, heart corruption, and

satan's

satan's temptations, he may be far from enjoying any assurance that he is a true believer. He is truly taught that Christ is the only way to the Father, and that it is his will, sinners, yea the chief of sinners, should come unto him by this way, yet will the legality and unbelief of his heart, backed by the temptations of satan, and corrupt doctrine of men, make a very strong opposition to it, and endeavor to turn him from the truth if possible. Wherefore the grace of faith in its beginning, by our reformers from Popery, was usually compared to a grain of mustard seed, by others it hath been likened to a spark in the mighty ocean, as also to a grain of pure gold mixed with much rubbish, likewise to a live coal covered with ashes ; all which similitudes may with propriety be granted, seeing the scriptures likens it to the smoking flax and bruised reed, *Isaiah xlii. 3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench : he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.* Hence it is conclusive that they who are effectually called by the grace and Spirit of God, may not perceive when the happy change took place. No wonder that this is the case with the Lord's people in general, if we consider that it happens frequently, when they are first spiritually illuminated, that not only this spiritual illumination hath much natural darkness to contend with, but the mind also uninformed in a doctrinal manner,

manner, what is and what is not the truth of experience. They feel themselves the subjects of much inward contention, inclined to opposite objects ; and though they may pant for God, like David, yet that mighty working of corruption, and the boisterous winds of temptation, which they cannot but be conscious of, will not permit them to draw any conclusion in their own favor, being unapprized that there may be a true perception of and trust in the mediator of the covenant, and the mercy and grace of God through that divine channel, notwithstanding so much ignorance, unbelief, distrust, slavish fear, misgivings, corrupt inclinations, horrid thoughts, and many other evils, that they sensibly feel within them. True beyond doubt it is that they who are born of God are the subjects of very opposite principles, which operate in every power and faculty of the soul, and mix themselves respectively in every act, whether inward or outward. Is there spiritual light in the understanding ? There is also much spiritual darkness.—Doth the eye of faith perceive Christ in the gospel ? What unbelief militates against it ! Doth the soul in some measure discern the path of duty ?—On the contrary what darkness is there concerning it ! Is an evangelical confidence manifested to be of the utmost importance ? What reasonings against it, from the legal obscurity of the mind !

Yea

Yea what fears of delusion ! It appears to the natural heart, as if true faith were but fancy, and as if the confidence of the gospel were but a vain trust. This fear and questioning appears most applicable to natural conscience, which is a powerful enemy to faith and trust in Jesus. The judicious *Dr. Goodwin* considers it as the greatest impediment to the operations of this grace : it knows nothing of salvation by another. It will acknowledge no sovereign but the law of God, therefore is it continually refusing to listen to the cheering declarations of the gospel. If then we would believe, we need stop both our ears to its clamours, and notwithstanding all its objections fly to Jesus. 'Tis from this quarter that the supposition of merit and prerequisites arise. It cannot tell how to be pacified without some personal conformity to the law of God, and as it is dissatisfied without some inherent righteousness, and outward obedience, so is it ever condemning the soul on account of inward corruption and external disobedience, notwithstanding the completeness of Jesus, as the end of the law for righteousness. Though darkness thus prevails in the conscience respecting justification and acceptance, is there not also much blindness and stupidity in it, as a director and guide into the path of God's commandments, which every believer ought to walk in out of love to Jesus for justifying grace and mercy ? It is apt

enough to condemn for sin, but it is very stupid in preserving from it, especially in times of temptation. ... It will require with much peremptoriness obedience in a legal, thro' the principle of corruption still remaining, is very faint in its demands thereof in an evangelical way. From all which who doth not see that though a person by the Spirit may believe with that faith, which in its nature is fiducial and assuring, yet he may be far from an assurance that he is a believer and a subject of the special grace of God. To this faculty let us add the memory.— Is this property of the human soul in them who are called the seat alone of those things which are evangelical and spiritual? Doth it always retain unmolested the doctrines, promises, and directions of the gospel? Is it always a faithful remembrancer? Or is it not apt to turn out of door the most honorable guests, for the admission of rebels and traitors? Surely, that man who knoweth but little of his own heart, will at times find that instead of considering the nature of grace and faith, as manifested in the gospel, and comparing himself therewith, that he hath enough to do to keep out of his memory the abominable, horrid, vain, sinful, and impertinent thoughts, which, like the men of Sodom at Lot's door, would be attempting to take possession: and on the contrary, that it requires the utmost diligence and assiduity to retain the least

least impressions which are of a spiritual nature; nay, were not the Lord to appear, not only for the soul before but after grace received, it could do nothing. As it is only by the light and power of the Spirit the Lord's people first believe, even so by his agency alone can they know and conclude they are believers; for it is as true respecting the faith of evidence, as it is in relation to that of confidence, viz. that only in his light can we see light. But for a further confirmation of this point let us also examine into the imagination. Were this faculty holy, heavenly, spiritual, and incapable of being polluted, then might the beginning of faith be self evident to the subject thereof. But is this the case even with those who are of long standing in the school of Christ? Do they not find such a multitude of sinful ideas and images spring up in their minds, that if they were to gain the world for thinking a good thought they cannot? And how ensnaring these are the renewed soul can very well declare, even to his great grief and affliction. Were they not of immediate influence on the will and affections, the believer would not be lost in such a labyrinth as he frequently is, for he well knows that if he regard not the expulsion of these enemies, they will soon captivate him and draw him even into practical transgressions; not only so, but his soul necessarily at such seasons is engaged in prayer to the

Lord for deliverance from these invaders, knowing he otherwise can have no thoughts of God, Christ, or the things of Christ, with any clearness or satisfaction. Surely, this is no small part of the spiritual warfare ! Is it not the experience at times of many a believer, that a sinful idea will so adhere unto his mind, that it appears to him as if it were an inhabitant, and impossible to be ejected ? And what are his fears then, but that he is of the number of those, over whom sin hath dominion ? At which season to conclude himself a believer appears to him both false and dishonest. If we consider the will, shall we not have alike cause of complaint and lamentation ? How inapt to attempt, and how tardy in prosecuting that which is good ! When on the contrary sin attracts it with such violence, that even the regenerated person under temptation, is frequently apprehensive he shall certainly be swallowed up of evil.— It were too tedious to trace the counteractings of corruption through all the affections, since melancholy experience of its too frequent prevalency, connected with the declaration of an inspired apostle touching himself, evidently prove it. *For* (says he) *Rom. vii. 18. I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.* This may suffice, yet were we to extract from the sacred word, what is there left on record, touching the operations of the several graces in the hearts of God's people, might

might we not affirm that each is counteracted by its contending corruption ? If this be the case, no marvel then that it is a matter so difficult, truly and properly to determine our state, whether we be in the faith or not ; but more so will it appear, when we reflect that it is not only necessary to prove to ourselves that we possess dispositions similar to the graces recorded in the word, but the graces themselves, not the semblance thereof, but the true offspring of an unfeigned faith, even the faith of God's elect, which may be considered, with the utmost propriety, as the root of all. Is our faith the faith of God's people ? Our love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and every other grace must be such as are peculiar to them ; but if the former be false, the latter must be so likewise.— What our Lord said in another case may be fitly applied to the matter in hand. *Matt. vii. 16. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ?* For surely where true faith is not, but only the appearance of it, there the other graces are not in reality. If this be true, no wonder there may be a very brilliant profession in religion, much zeal and boldness, and apparently whatever may adorn the christian character, and yet all be shew and not substance : that this hath been, and still is the unhappy circumstance of some, the truly christian world universally acknowledge. May the Lord of his infinite mercy keep us from a mistake of this

this sort, and suffer not an error so awful to ensnare and fatally to enthrall us, but open the eyes of our understanding, and lead us from the counterfeit of religion to the experience of its reality ! From what hath been observed it appears very improbable that there are to be found even any of God's people, who were conscious they truly believed when they first looked to Christ, yet the Lord's dealings in a way of manifestation and comfort with his people are various. Some are kept a long time in sorrow and trouble, while others are soon brought to an happy information that the Lord is their God. That this may be and is the case is plain from various parts of sacred writ, viz. *Ephes.* i. 13. "In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom after ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." And *Rom.* v. 1, 2. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." These scriptures will serve to evidence the case of the latter. But that many are kept in darkness with respect to their interest, and yet God's people, seems to be as clearly set forth in the scripture following. *Isai.* l. 10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness,

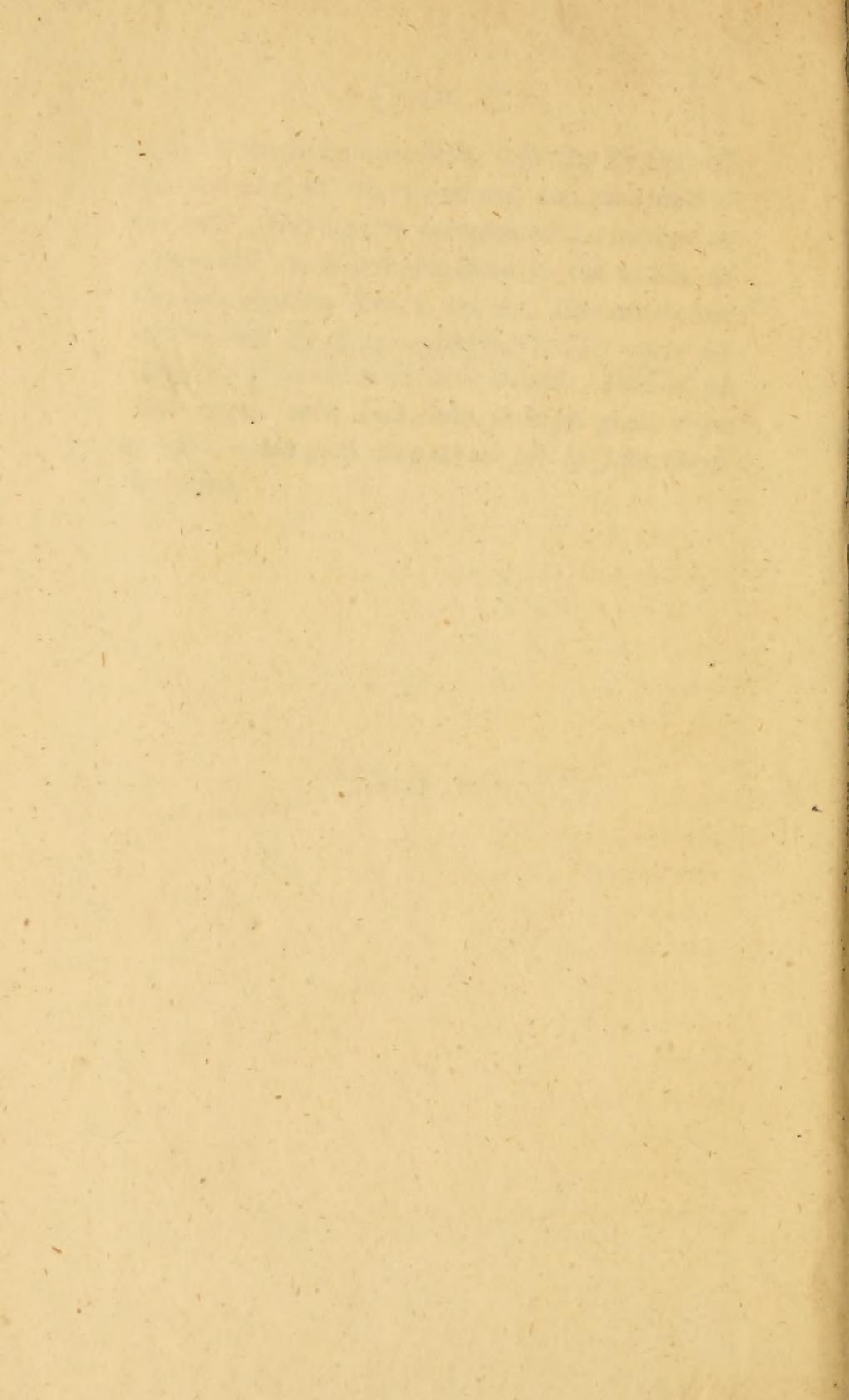
ness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." What further remains is, that as professing christians are very apt to build their faith and confidence on their past or present frames, and to apply Christ and all his promises, by virtue of a supposed interest in him ; it becomes highly necessary that they who do so, be well assured that their frames be true and genuine, and that their interest in Christ is more than imaginary. That a mistake herein is possible, see *Mr. Edwards's* Treatise on Religious Affections, and you will find in that work he would prove that natural joyous frames, as well as seemingly gracious affections, may be mistaken for the real tokens of special grace and favor, when in truth they are but counterfeit. If therefore we should make the counterfeit our only warrant for believing in the gospel and gospel promises, whether this may not be dangerous, let the impartial judge ; but allowing we are the subjects of the special and genuine operations of the divine Spirit, even by making these such we certainly honor the Lord's blessings above himself, and make his gifts the foundation of our confidence, rather than his truth and faithfulness in the gospel : for frames being fleeting, they are not so certain a ground to ourselves, but the gospel is a surer warrant and firmer encouragement, to build all our hopes and expectations on Christ, as the

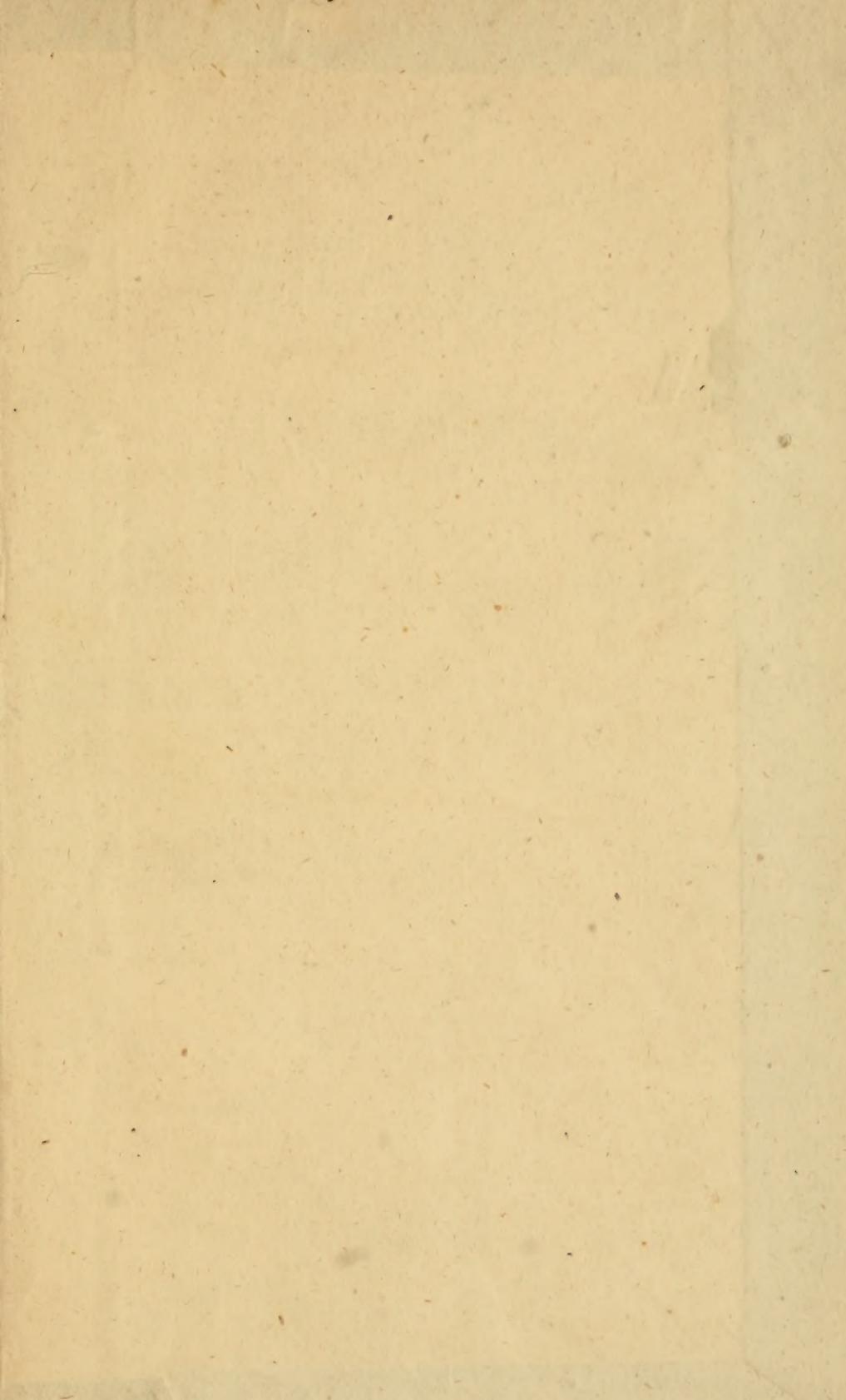
end of the law for righteousness, to the greater honor of divine truth. It must be allowed that the graces of the Spirit in their operations and effects, also the various special experiences of the divine favor, manifested to the heart, ought not to be treated with indifference and neglect, but should by every means of the Lord's appointment, whether by prayer, meditation, examination, Christian conference, hearing or reading the word of God, be kept if possible in lively and thankful remembrance, and considered as the first fruits of the heavenly inheritance; also as certain and indubitable evidences that we shall be partakers thereof, yet if our hope for future grace in time, and at last glory in eternity, be only built thereon, so that when the evidence thereof is clear and bright, we centre in it as our trust and rejoicing, and when hidden and obscured are as those who are without hope, we without question are guilty of a very great error. Ought we not rather to judge in our best season, that what we have received is all the effect of free mercy and favor through Christ alone, that it is vastly short of what is our privilege to enjoy, and what other saints have experienced, that notwithstanding we are the subjects of such rich grace, yet through the indwelling of the old man and his operations, all our actions whether of mind or body, are all sinful in the eye of infinite purity, and that therefore

fore the immaculate holiness and righteousness of the mediator, must be our only plea for all future bestowments of new covenant blessings, whether in time or eternity. And in order to this ought we not to consider the gospel as before described, calling on sinner and saint, thus to trust and hope in the Lord. If we answer yes, we then shall have a ground for faith and hope, when our evidences are so obscured that we cannot come to the Lord persuaded we are children, and prevent inaction in the absence thereof. Surely divine blessings after are as undeserved as before calling! Therefore though grace received be an evidence of future grace to be conferred, yet to ask the latter for sake of the former, and not as a free favor on account of Christ, is paying to the Lord's gifts the honor due alone to him. We do not ask the pardon of our daily offences in this manner; if it were so, what should prevent a total forgetfulness of the mediator, 'till we thought we had reason to question our state? But if we ask the remission of our daily sins solely on his account, why not every communication of grace in the same manner? Wherefore let us be concerned to adopt through grace the language of the great apostle Paul, *Gal. ii, 19, 20.* "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which

which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Having now compleated the inquiry as proposed, I conclude therefore in the words of the same apostle, *Rom. v. 20, 21.* *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

F I N I S.





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